

Shake Your Mailbox Day Fact Sheet

What is Shake Your Mailbox Day?

- Governor Snyder has proclaimed October 15, 2011 as Shake Your Mailbox Day in Michigan;
- Shake Your Mailbox Day is a joint effort on the part of your county road agency and the United States Postal Service (U.S.P.S.)
- The day is designed to get the public involved in proactive mailbox maintenance;
- Record snow falls in recent winters have led to an increase in the number of mailboxes damaged by heavy snow thrown from passing plows. Many of the mailboxes damaged by winter snow removal have become loose or in need of repair over years of use. Damage to these posts and receptacles could have been prevented by proper routine maintenance;
- Road agencies recognize damage to mail receptacles is an inconvenience to residents and are seeking to minimize the impact by encouraging preventative maintenance;
- These preventable damages cause negative public relations for road agencies often accused of hitting the mailboxes with the snow plow;
- Although the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and many local road agencies have policies for addressing mailboxes clearly damaged during winter maintenance operations, these policies vary by county. One thing, however is consistent, road agencies have never assumed responsibility for mailbox damage caused by flying snow that is being plowed from the roadway; and
- Local community organizations are encouraged to become involved in helping those in the community who may be unable to check for mailbox damage and make the needed repairs.

What Should Residents Do?

- Residents should prepare mailboxes for winter by tightening screws and ensuring the post and receptacle are secure enough to endure large amounts of thrown snow. If the mailbox moves when shaken, this is likely an indication the mailbox and/or post may not withstand standard snow removal operations and should be repaired or replaced prior to the onset of winter.

Other typical mailbox improvement activities (preventive maintenance) include:

- Replace loose hinges on a mailbox door;
- Repaint or replace a mailbox that may have rusted, exposing dangerous, sharp edges; and
- Replace or add reflective house numbers to allow emergency responders to more easily find your home.

What you need to know about mailboxes?

- Mailboxes are one of the only objects allowed by law to be placed in the road right-of-way;
- The location and construction of mailboxes must conform to specific rules and regulations;

- Each year, 70 to 100 people are killed in accidents involving rural mailboxes. Many others are permanently injured because mailboxes and their supports penetrate the windshield;
- Although steel tractor wheels, milk cans filled with concrete, bricks and other items are artistic, they present a serious roadside hazard to motorists; and
- They also present a liability risk for homeowners. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) warns “private individuals and corporation, as well as governmental entities, may be liable for their roles in creating or maintaining highway hazards.”

Michigan’s state and local road agencies follow the standards published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in “*A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways.*”

- Only one support should be used per box or group of boxes;
- Wood posts should be no more than 4 ½ inches diameter if round, 4x4 inches if rectangular;
- Metal pipes should be standard steel or aluminum with no more than a 2 inch inside diameter;
- Supports should yield or collapse if struck. They should bend or fall away from a vehicle and not create a severe deceleration;
- Supports cannot be fitted with an anchor plate (metal post), embedded over 24 inches into the ground, or set in concrete;
- The mailbox must be constructed of sheet metal, plastic or similar weight materials, with weight not to exceed 11 pounds;
- The United States Postal Service asks that roadside mailboxes be 36 to 42 inches off of the ground, and 8 to 12 inches behind the shoulder or the curb;
- A mailbox and its support will be considered **hazardous to motorists** when the support exceeds the described structural limitations; and
- Any mailbox and its support considered to be a hazard should be removed from the road right-of-way and replaced.