

“MAILBOXES: A SAFETY CONCERN”

Mailbox installation may seem simple, but residents need to think about safety before they install a new mailbox. Mailboxes that are set firmly into the ground, and/or have large posts can become a fixed object hazard. Mailboxes that are not fixed properly to their support can break loose and become dangerous projectiles, endangering motorists and residents.

When installing a mailbox; residents need to look at a few issues before selecting a location. Safety and convenience of both the mail carrier and the patron must be addressed. A mailbox should not be installed where a person will have to walk along the shoulder of a road for more than 200 feet. The mailbox should also be located in an area visible to motorists, but should not be placed too close to the roadway or the useable shoulder. It should be placed on the right side of the road in the direction that the postal employee is traveling and on the far side of the patron's driveway.

The U.S Postal Service has regulations for mailboxes and mailbox height, it does not have any regulations regarding mailbox installation. The U.S. Postal Service only approves certain mailbox types and requires that the bottom of the box be 42 to 48 inches above the ground. This height is at windshield level and is the main reason for having the mailbox firmly attached to the post. A mailbox that becomes unattached can break through the windshield of a vehicle and possibly injure the occupants.

The mailbox should be approved by the U.S. Postal Service, and should be as light weight as possible. No more than two mailboxes should be fastened to the same support, and a distance equal to three-quarters the height of the mailbox should be left as a space between the boxes. The mailbox should be attached to the support firmly to prevent it from coming off and possibly injuring motorists and residents.

Improper support systems, such as concrete or sand filled containers, and thick metal pipes, can be hazards to motorists. Supports should be made of lightweight materials that will easily break away. If metal pipes are used, the pipe should not have a diameter greater than two inches. Wood posts should not be greater than four inches square, or have a diameter of more than four and one-half inches. The post should not be more than 24 inches into the ground and should not be set in concrete. By following these guidelines, the mailbox post will either break or be moved rather than be a safety hazard for motorists and residents.

Before installing a mailbox, residents should contact the local permit department to determine if there are any mailbox ordinances in their community. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has published a guide for mailbox location and assembly titled, “A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways”. AASHTO can be contacted at: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Suite 225.444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, (202) 624 - 5800.*

*This information is provided by the TIA (Traffic Improvement Association)

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WEXFORD COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN A SAFE AND EFFICIENT ROAD SYSTEM

STANDARD MAILBOX POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to allow for the accommodation of mailboxes and paper delivery boxes within the Right of Ways under the jurisdiction of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Wexford County, MI. The purpose of the specifications listed herein is to aid in providing a reasonably safe transportation system for the motoring public.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Wexford County (WCRC) to require mailboxes and newspaper delivery boxes located within the Right of Way to be constructed in a manner which does not substantially interfere with the safety of the motoring public or their operation and maintenance of the county road system. A mailbox installation that does not conform to the provisions of this policy will be considered an unauthorized encroachment on the Right of Way and removal shall be administered in accordance with the State of Michigan Act 368, Public Acts of 1925, as amended. This policy is consistent with the rules and regulations of the U.S. Postal Service.

Mailbox Location

Mailbox location shall be determined by the U.S. Postal Service and all other delivery boxes should comply by placing their boxes on the same side of the road. The bottom of the box shall be set at an elevation determined by the U.S. Postal service, usually between 42 and 48 inches above the road surface. The roadside face of the mailbox shall be a minimum of 8 inches from the outside edge of the road shoulder. No mailboxes shall be placed within 100 feet of the intersection of two roads, public or private.

EXCEPTION:

The roadside face of the mailbox may be placed no closer than directly above the back of the curb on roads that have concrete or asphalt curbs.

Structure and Composition

Mailboxes shall be of light steel, metal or plastic construction conforming to the requirements of the U.S. Postal Service. Newspaper boxes shall be of standard light metal or plastic construction specifically constructed for newspaper delivery.

No more than two mailboxes may be mounted on a support structure unless the support structure and mailbox arrangement meet the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards. However lightweight newspaper boxes may be mounted below the mailbox on the side of the support. Mailbox supports shall not be set in concrete unless the support design is shown to be safe by crash tests when so installed.

A single, 4 inch x 4 ½ inch diameter wooden post or a metal post with strength no greater than a standard 2 inch diameter standard strength steel pipe are permissible as supports. No support shall be embedded more than 24 inches into the ground. A metal post shall not be fitted with an anchor plate but it may have an anti-twist device that extends no more than 10 inches below the ground surface.

The post-to-box attachment details should be of sufficient strength to prevent the mailbox from separating from the post top should the installation be struck by a vehicle. AASHTO publication "A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways" (1994) documents acceptable attachment details (available from WCRC) and acceptable mailbox support assemblies.

Removal of Nonconforming or Unsafe Mailboxes

Any mailbox that is found to violate the intent of this policy shall be removed by the owner upon notification. At the discretion of the Manager or his/her designee, and based on an assessment of hazard to the public, the owner will be granted not less than 24 hours nor more than 30 days to remove an unacceptable installation. If not removed within the specified time, the installation will be removed at the owner's expense as provided by Act 368, Public Acts of 1925, as amended. The mailbox and its support will be considered hazardous to motorists when traffic speed limits are greater than 25 mph and the box and the support exceed the described structural limitations or the box is installed too close to the roadway.

Individuals who have mailboxes of another standard do so at their own risk.