

Inspection Procedures

Timely and periodic inspections, both day and night, are an important element of a sign and marking management program. Section 668.10 of the Iowa Code states in part, “In any action brought pursuant to this chapter, the state or a municipality shall not be assigned a percentage of fault for any of the following: 668.10(1). The failure to place, erect, or install a Stop sign, traffic control device, or other regulatory sign as defined in the *MUTCD* adopted pursuant to Section 321.252. However, once a regulatory device has been placed, created or installed, the state or municipality may be assigned a percentage of fault for its failure to maintain the device.”

In addition to the requirements of the code, motorists depend on traffic control devices and markings that are uniform, legible, understandable, and easy to see both day and night. Highway agencies should take appropriate steps to ensure that signs are maintained in good condition. Timely inspections are a major element in this responsibility.

Features to be noted during inspections might include legibility, obstructions, mounting height, offset, reflectivity, and overall conditions. Besides noting physical deficiencies, quality inspections also can identify signs no longer needed, unnecessary redundancies, missing devices, vandalism, condition of supports, and need for additional control. In addition to signs and markings, other devices used for traffic control in the agency should be included in an inspection program including delineators, object markers, and barricades.

While the use of trained, experienced observers, especially for night reviews, is recommended, input from others is also valuable and worthwhile to solicit. Other agency employees who travel jurisdiction roads and streets frequently, law enforcement, and even the general public can be an important adjunct to the inspection effort.

Night reviews are particularly important to assess visibility performance of signs and markings. It is essential that night inspections be carried out in conditions that duplicate those experienced most commonly by drivers. Use of a retroreflectometer or similar device can document quantitative measures of reflectivity, but visual observations by a trained inspector, using clean headlights on low beam, will provide good evidence of nighttime visibility for motorists.

Recording the inspection effort is important. Use a standard inspection form, and note the date and conditions observed, along with any corrective action taken, in the agency’s inventory system.

Write your agency’s established inspection schedule in the following blanks:

Daytime inspections: _____

Night reviews: _____

A sample inspection form is shown on the following page.

Please refer to Sections 1A.05 and 2A.23 of the *MUTCD* for additional comments on inspection and maintenance of signs.

