

Theft and Vandalism

Theft and vandalism of traffic control devices is a common occurrence in most areas and can become a serious problem for local transportation agencies.

Vandalism and theft of signs or other devices result in increased maintenance costs and can even expose local agencies to liability if an appropriate response is not made.

Regulatory signs, such as Stop, Yield, and Do Not Enter, seem to be the most popular for theft. Specific street name signs and certain route markers are also frequently removed.

Many approaches have been developed to reduce theft and vandalism. Higher mounting and increased lateral displacement are often successful. Various sign substrates (plywood, steel, or aluminum) have particular attributes to consider. Several types of vandal-proof fasteners that resist removal are available. Special anchors, anti-twist, and pull-out devices make supports more resistant to push over.

Sign face treatments, coatings, and transparent sheeting all make removal of graffiti less difficult. Identification stickers can be beneficial in identifying stolen signs and devices when they are found.

Not all damage to traffic control devices is intentional, and the use of flexible supports can

reduce maintenance on narrow roadways frequently used by wide agricultural equipment.

A proactive approach to address theft and vandalism of traffic control devices is often warranted in local road agencies. Frequent inspections together with good record keeping of losses and increased maintenance costs can be very beneficial, as are educational initiatives and public service announcements. Raising public awareness of these costs and potential safety exposure using displays of damaged signs and devices can be effective. Cooperation and communication with law and justice officials is important in achieving a more successful rate of enforcement and conviction for violations.

Response time for replacement of vandalized signs should be part of a jurisdiction's sign policy. Regulatory signs, such as Stop and Yield signs, should be given highest priority for reinstallation and should be replaced as soon as possible. Some jurisdictions replace Stop and Yield signs on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis. Most other sign replacements may be carried out during normal working hours. Each jurisdiction should develop and follow a policy for repair and replacement of road signs.

For more information, refer to the 1986 U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration's *Manual on Countermeasures for Sign Vandalism*.