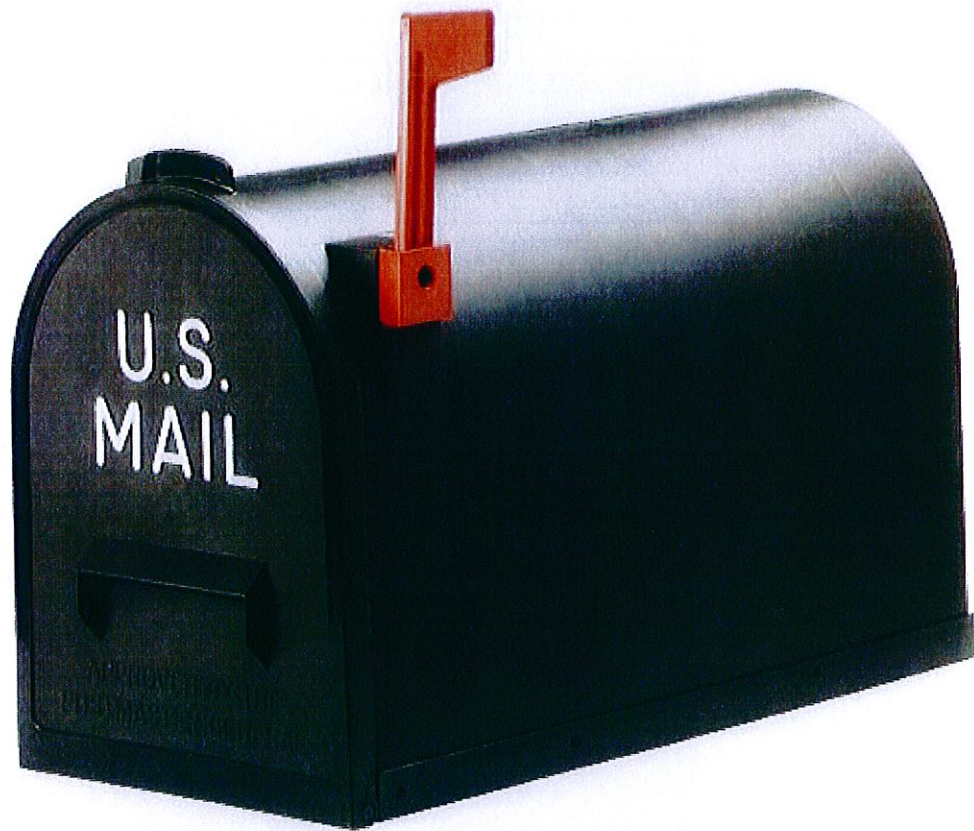


# Price County Highway Department

## Mailbox Accommodation Policy

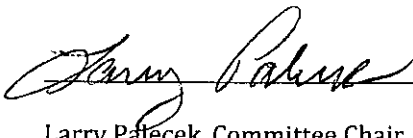
December 11, 2013



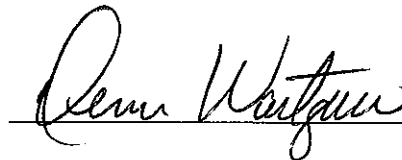
**PRICE COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
MAILBOX ACCOMMODATION POLICY**

This policy shall govern the installation and maintenance of mail and newspaper boxes within the county and state highway right-of-way. No modifications to this policy are anticipated until 01-01-2015

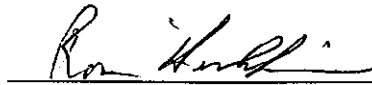
This policy was adopted by the Price County Highway Committee on December 11, 2013.



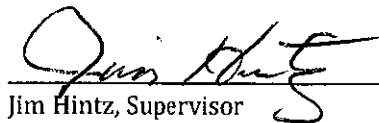
Larry Palecek, Committee Chair



Dennis Wartgow, Recording Secretary



Ron Heikkinen, Vice Chair



Jim Hintz, Supervisor



Travis Nez, Supervisor

PRICE COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

***POLICY FOR THE ACCOMMODATION OF MAILBOXES AND NEWSPAPER  
DELIVERY BOXES ON HIGHWAY  
RIGHT-OF-WAYS***

No mailbox or newspaper delivery box will be allowed to exist on the highway right-of-way if it interferes with the safety of the traveling public or the function, maintenance, or operation of the highway system. A mailbox installation that does not conform to the provisions of this regulation is an unauthorized encroachment under State Statute 86.04.

The location and construction of mailboxes shall conform to the rules and regulations of the US Postal Service as well as to standards established by the Price County Highway Department. Standards for the location and construction of mailboxes are available from:

**Price County Highway Department  
P.O. Box 169  
704 North Lake Avenue  
Phillips, WI 54555  
715-339-3081**

A mailbox installation that conforms to the following criteria will be considered acceptable unless in the judgement of the Highway Commissioner, the installation interferes with the safety of the traveling public or the function, maintenance, or operation of the highway system.

**LOCATION**

Mailboxes shall be located on the right-hand side of the roadway in the direction of the delivery route. The bottom of the box shall be set at an elevation established by the US Postal Service, usually between 42" and 48" above the roadway surface. The roadside face of the box shall be offset from the edge of the shoulder 6 inches. Under no circumstance should the mailbox face or front of the box extend past the outside edge of the shoulder.

Exceptions to the lateral placement criteria above will exist on residential streets and certain designated rural roads where the Highway Department deems it in the public interest to permit lesser clearances or to require greater clearances. On curbed streets, the roadside face of the mailbox shall be set back from the face of curb a distance between 6 and 12 inches. On residential streets without curbs or all weather shoulders and that carry low traffic volumes operating at low speeds, the roadside face of a mailbox shall be offset between 8 and 12 inches behind the edge of pavement.

Where a mailbox is located at a driveway entrance, it shall be placed on the far side of the driveway in the direction of the delivery route.

Where a mailbox is located at an intersecting road, it shall be located a minimum of 100 feet beyond the center of the intersecting road in the direction of the delivery route. This distance shall be increased to 200 feet when the average daily traffic on the intersecting road exceeds 400 vehicles per day.

## **STRUCTURE**

Mailboxes shall be of light sheet metal or plastic construction conforming to the requirements of the US Postal Service. Newspaper delivery boxes shall be of light sheet metal or plastic construction of minimum dimensions suitable for holding a newspaper. Heavy, large, or ornamental mailboxes are *not recommended*. These mailboxes are a hazard to the traveling public. They can be distracting and lighter mailboxes are designed specifically to minimize damage if a collision occurs.

No more than two mailboxes may be mounted on a support structure unless the support structure and mailbox arrangement have been shown to be safe by crash testing. However, lightweight newspaper boxes may be mounted below the mailbox on the side of the mailbox support.

Mailbox supports shall not be set in concrete unless the support design has been shown to be safe by crash tests when so installed.

A single 4 inch x 4 inch (nominal) or 4 inch diameter wooden post or a metal post with a strength no greater than a 1½ inch diameter standard strength steel pipe and embedded no more than 24 inches into the ground will be acceptable as a mailbox support. 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 box from separating from the post top if the installation is struck by a vehicle.

The minimum spacing between the centers of support posts shall be three fourths the height of the posts above the groundline.

Mailbox support designs not described in this policy will be acceptable if approved by the Price County Highway Commissioner.

Only "swing-away" style installations are recommended on all right-of-ways maintained by the Price County Highway Department. While Postal Service requirements and safety concerns can be addressed by other installations, only a "swing-away" type box accommodates the needs of highway maintenance activities, especially winter maintenance.

See Appendix A for examples of approved mailbox installations.

## **SHOULDER REPAIRS**

It will be the responsibility of the postal patron to inform the Highway Department of any new or existing mailbox installation where shoulder construction is inadequate to permit all weather vehicular access to the mailbox.

## **REMOVAL OF NONCONFORMING OR UNSAFE MAILBOXES**

Any mailbox that is found to violate the intent of this policy shall be removed by the postal patron upon notification by the Price County Highway Department. At the discretion of the Highway Department, based on an assessment of hazard to the public, the patron will be granted not less than 24 hours nor more than 30 days to remove an unacceptable mailbox. After the specified removal period has expired, the unacceptable mailbox will be removed by the Price County Highway Department at the patron's expense, as per State Statute 86.04. See Appendix B for a copy of the pertinent section of State Statute 86.04.

## MAILBOXES DAMAGED BY HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

In Price County, snow removal operations and summer maintenance operations frequently conflict with mailboxes. The Price County Highway Department's employees shall make every reasonable effort to avoid damage to mailboxes. Adherence to the recommendations of this policy should minimize conflicts and safety problems, however in the event damage occurs to a mailbox on the highway right-of-way, the following procedures shall be followed by Price County Highway Department personnel.

Step 1 – A representative of the Department shall record the complaint and visit the mail box site.

Step 2 – If it can be reasonably ascertained that the damage was not caused by Price County Highway Department maintenance operations or if the damage was not caused by direct contact with Department maintenance equipment (flying snow or ice from plowing operations does not constitute direct contact), it shall be the responsibility of the postal patron to repair or replace their damaged mailbox. The postal patron shall be provided a copy of the Department's policy and guidelines for proper mailbox installation. No further action is required. Go to Step 3, if the damage is due to direct contact with Price County Highway Department equipment.

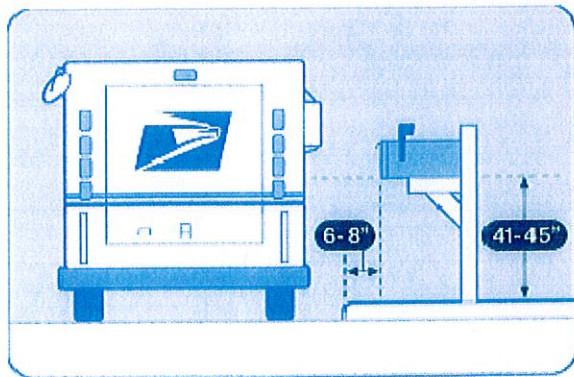
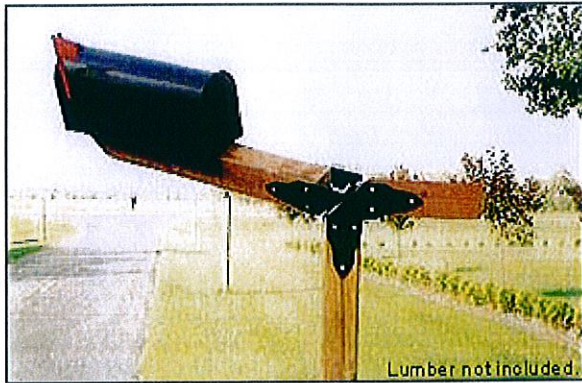
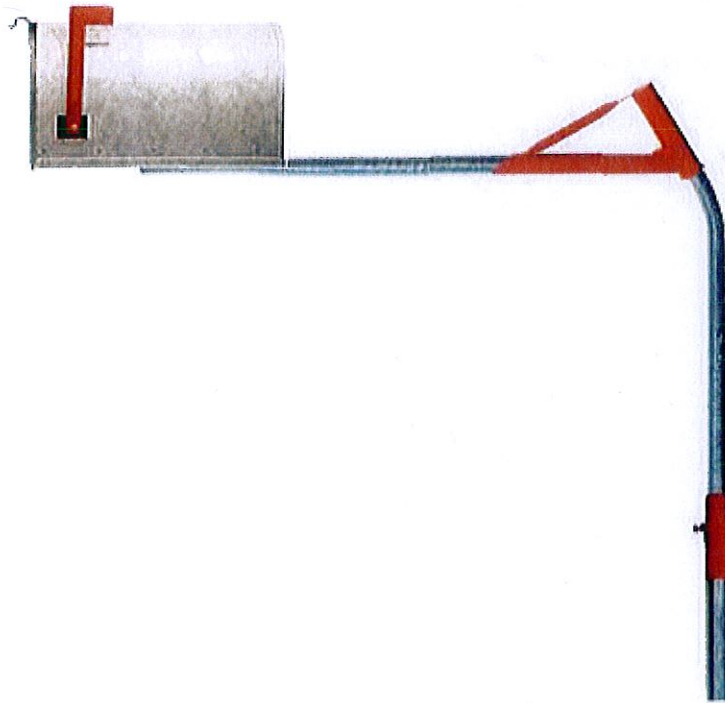
Step 3 – If it can be reasonably ascertained that the mailbox was damaged due to direct contact with Department maintenance equipment, the following assessment shall be made:

- A. If the mailbox installation is as recommended by the Department and meets all requirements, the Department shall replace the mailbox with a standard mailbox approved by the US Postal Service. The Department will not pay for the replacement of decorative or non-standard boxes. The mailbox support shall also be repaired at Department expense.
- B. If the mailbox is a swing away style installation that fails to meet standards with respect to location or height, the Department shall replace the mailbox with a standard mailbox approved by the US Postal Service. The Department will not pay for the replacement of decorative or non-standard boxes. The mailbox support shall not be repaired at Department expense. The postal patron shall be provided a copy of the Department's policy and guidelines for proper mailbox installation. No further replacement or repairs will be made by the Department until such time as the installation meets all standards and requirements.
- C. If the mailbox is a non-recommended installation meeting all standards for location, height, and structure, the Department shall replace the mailbox with a standard mailbox approved by the US Postal Service. The Department will not pay for the replacement of decorative or non standard boxes. The mailbox support shall not be repaired at Department expense. The postal patron shall be provided a copy of the Department's policy and guidelines for proper mailbox installation. No further replacement or repairs will be made by the Department until such time as a properly placed swing away design support is in place.
- D. If the mailbox is a non recommended installation and is improperly located and / or is a safety hazard. The Department shall not replace or repair the mailbox or its support. The postal patrol shall be provided a copy of the Department's policy and guidelines for proper mailbox installation.

## APPLICABILITY

This policy shall apply to all highways maintained by the Price County Highway Department.

Appendix A



## Appendix B

### 86.04 Highway encroachments.

(1) ORDER FOR REMOVAL. If any highway right-of-way shall be encroached upon, under or over by any fence, stand, building or any other structure or object, and including encroachments caused by acquisition by the public of new or increased widths of highway right-of-way, the department, in case of a state trunk highway, the county highway committee, in case of a county trunk highway, or the city council, village or town board, in case of a street or highway maintained by or under the authority of any city, village or town, may order the occupant or owner of the land through or by which the highway runs, and to which the encroachment shall be appurtenant, to remove the encroachment beyond the limits of the highway within 30 days. The order shall specify the extent and location of the encroachment with reasonable certainty, and shall be served upon the occupant or owner of the land through or by which the highway runs, and to which the encroachment shall be appurtenant.

(2) NONREMOVAL. If the occupant or owner upon whom the order is served shall not deny such encroachment, under sub. (3), and the encroachment is not removed within 30 days after the service of such order, the occupant or owner shall forfeit \$1 for every day after the expiration of that time during which the encroachment continues. An action to recover such penalty may be brought in any court of record in the county. In all cases where a judgment is rendered, the judgment shall order that the occupant or owner remove the encroachment within the time fixed by the judgment, and upon failure to obey the order, the department, county highway committee, or city council, village or town board, as appropriate, may remove the encroachment and recover from the occupant or owner the cost thereof.

(3) DENIAL OF ENCROACHMENT, PROCEDURE. If, within 30 days after being served with the order issued under sub. (1), the owner or occupant delivers a denial in writing of the alleged encroachment to the ordering body, or fails to make a denial, the ordering body may commence an action to remove the encroachment in a court of record in the county where the property is located.

**History:** [1977 c. 29 s. 1654 \(8\) \(c\)](#); [1977 c. 273](#); [1987 a. 137 s. 6](#); [1991 a. 316](#); [1993 a. 490](#); [1995 a. 225](#).

**Cross-reference:** For highway obstructions see s. [86.022](#).

Adverse possession is a defense to an encroachment action under this section. *Department of Transportation v. Black Angus Steak House*, [111 Wis. 2d 342](#), [330 N.W.2d 240](#) (Ct. App. 1983).



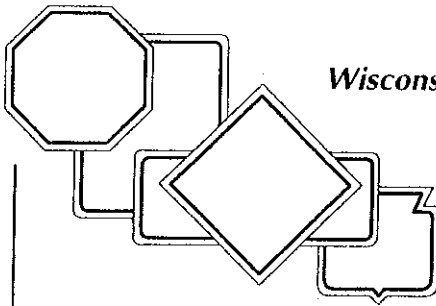
**Highway Maintenance Manual**  
**Chapter 06 Winter Maintenance**  
**Section 15 Snow Removal**  
**Subject 45 Mailboxes**

**Bureau of Highway Maintenance**  
**January 2012**

**1.0 Mailboxes**

A mailbox damaged by the impact of plowed snow or ice shall be replaced or repaired by the mailbox owner and at the owner's expense. When a mailbox is hit by a plow and damaged, the incident is subject to each county's policy.

If the mailbox is damaged by another service provider, other than a county highway department, the replacement or repair of the mailbox will be the responsibility of the service provider.



## Mailbox Safety

There are 30 to 35 million rural and suburban mailboxes in this country. These mailboxes must accommodate both the owner and the mail carrier. However, safety considerations are often overlooked. This bulletin describes improper and unsafe mailbox installation and discusses proper installation and siting. At the end is a list of points to be covered in a local mailbox ordinance.

Although crash reports related to mailboxes are sketchy, the limited data available suggests that 70 to 100 highway deaths in the U.S. each year could be attributed to mailboxes. This data relates the construction of the mailbox system, and especially its support, to the severity of the accident.

The Department of Transportation Division of Highways surveyed mailbox-related crashes in Wisconsin. In 1987 alone, there were over 1700 crashes involving mailboxes that resulted in 144 injuries and two deaths. Improper support systems, such as milk canisters or barrels filled with concrete, were most significant in crashes where there were injuries. Improper placement was most significant in non-injury crashes.

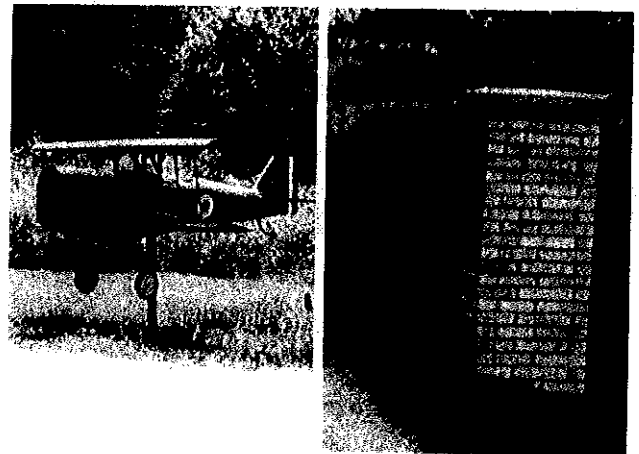
Weak attachments between box and post are another hazard. These may permit the box to penetrate the car's passenger compartment. Multiple mailboxes on a single support, or placed too close together, can also be hazards.

### Hazardous mailbox installations

Most curb or roadside mailboxes are relatively simple and unlikely to pose a serious crash threat to vehicles. These are relatively lightly constructed on supports which will easily break off, posing little harm to the vehicle. What threat they may pose is from the box parting from the post and entering the passenger compartment.

The U.S. Postal Service has some requirements for the mailbox and its height, but does not regulate installa-

tion. It approves only certain types of boxes and requires that they be installed with the box bottom 42 inches to 48 inches above the ground. Local postal representatives will review the box location for carrier access and safety and will make verbal recommendations. They have not become involved in structure and installation of the box. Thus the nation's highways are lined with multitudes of installations, some of which are highly hazardous obstacles.



*Heavy ornamental mailbox installations may be roadside hazards.*

It is the heavy, ornamental or multiple installations that can be lethal roadside obstacles. Masonry installations, large receptacles filled with sand or concrete, metal posts larger than 1 1/2 inches inside diameter, and wood posts larger than a nominal 4 inches square or 4 inches diameter, are a hazard.

Such ornamental mailboxes as old plows, wagon wheels, and comic installations such as "air mail delivery" (a non-functional box on an extra high post) are hazards or obstacles. More than two boxes mounted on a single support, or installed too close together, can be hazardous even if supports are light-weight. Crash

tests show that when more than two mailboxes are mounted together, some of the boxes can penetrate the passenger compartment. The use of a plank to mount several mailboxes is especially hazardous.

### Guidelines for safe installation

It is best to keep the entire mailbox installation as light weight as possible. This permits a vehicle crashing into it to break off the mailbox with less damage to the vehicle. The heavier the installation, the less likely it will move instantaneously, causing more damage to the vehicle and injury to its occupants.

For safer mailboxes, follow four basic guidelines:

- Use support posts which will easily break off or move out of the way.
- Mount no more than two mailboxes on one support post.
- Attach the mailbox firmly to the support post using adequately strong bolts and plates.
- Consider roadside conditions in selecting a site.

### Supports

The Postal Service requires that the bottom of the box be 42 to 48 inches above ground level. The following are recommended standards for supports which ensure that they will break away on impact:

- Pipes should be 1½ inch inside diameter or less.
- Square wood supports should not be larger than 4 inches by 4 inches nominal. Round wood posts should not be larger than 4 inches in diameter.
- Metal channel posts should not weigh more than 2 pounds per foot.
- Imbed supports no more than 24 inches into the ground and do not imbed them in concrete.
- Do not use anchor plates with metal posts. Anti-twist flanges are acceptable as long as they do not project more than 10 inches into the ground. These should be attached to the metal post or pipe with 2¾ inch (nominal) muffler clamps. The Federal Highway Administration has published *Accepted Safety Hardware*. For more information contact the State Division Office of the Federal Highway Administration.

### Multiple installations

Mount no more than two mailboxes on a single support. Separate the supports a distance apart which equals three-quarters of the height of the post above ground (Figure 1). Thus boxes mounted four feet above ground should be at least three feet apart (post center to post

center). Figure 2 shows an alternate type multiple box system.

### Support construction

Use U.S. Postal Service approved mailboxes. The AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) publication, *A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways*, contains detailed plans for mailbox assemblies and location. Insuring a firm mailbox-to-post attachment is one of the most important safety considerations.

Figures 3 and 4 show examples of a cantilever mailbox installation. While the cantilever design is helpful to snow removal operations it may cause the mailbox to impact a vehicle at the windshield. Raising the support arm height and firmly suspending the box below may be another way to lessen the windshield damage.

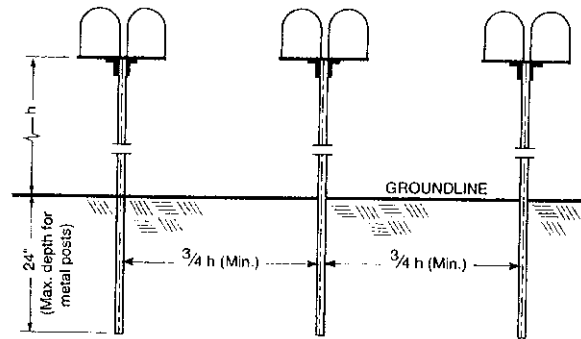


Figure 1: Spacing for multiple post installations

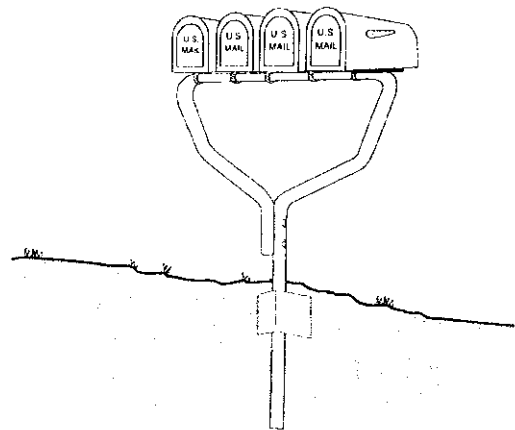


Figure 2: Suggested multiple box support system



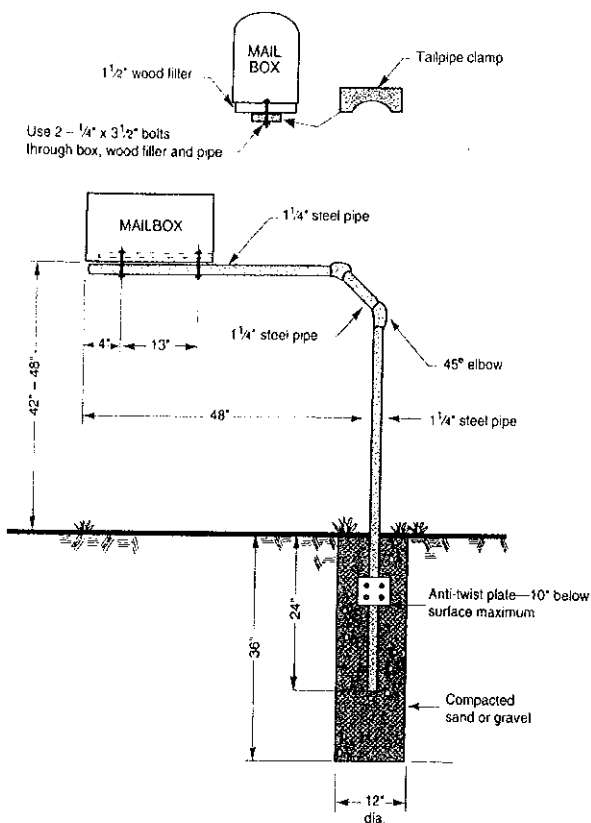


Figure 3: Example of a steel pipe cantilever mailbox support

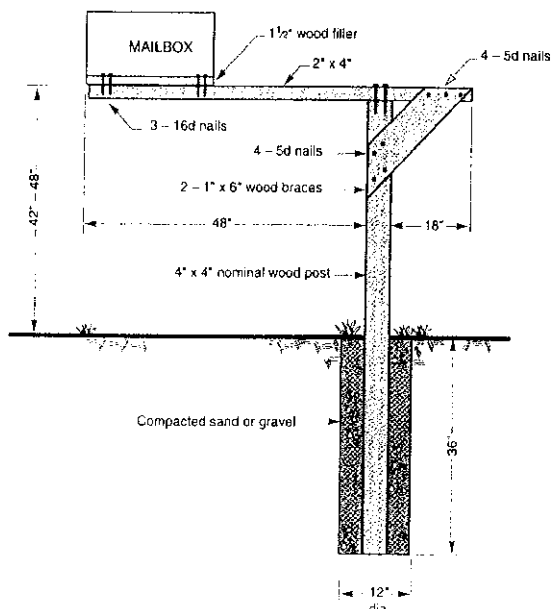


Figure 4: Example of a wood cantilever mailbox support

## Siting mailboxes

In Wisconsin snow removal operations frequently conflict with mailboxes. Several local agencies have developed a standard for mailbox installations which has been successful in reducing the number of mailboxes damaged or demolished by snow plows. The standard is published in local papers (Figure 5).

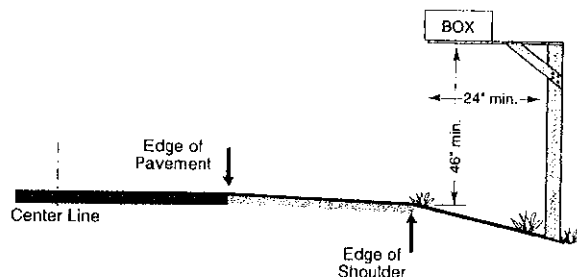
They recommend placing the box on a 24-inch minimum arm, at a minimum height of 46 inches. The front of the box should be aligned with the outside edge of the shoulder.

Locating mailboxes along the roadside is complicated by many factors other than snow removal. These require balancing the maximum convenience to the patron with safety considerations for highway traffic, and with postal carrier convenience and safety. You must also take into account existing roadside conditions such as proximity to intersections; blind spots caused by curves, hills and vegetation; and utility poles, guardrails, nearby bridges, and other physical installations.

## NOTICE

### Recommended Mailbox Installations

To avoid damage to your mailbox and also allow the snowplows to remove the snow from under your mailbox, the following dimensions are recommended.



Placing mailboxes a short distance away from driveways and intersections helps to avoid vision-restricting snowbanks and also damage to your mailbox. The box and base should be strong enough to withstand flying snow and slush from traffic and snowplows.

By order of the \_\_\_\_\_  
and with the approval of the U.S. Postal Service.

Highway Commissioner

Postmaster

Figure 5: Sample mailbox notice

Highway type and traffic conditions	Width of shoulder or turnout at mailbox		Distance face of mailbox is to be offset behind edge of shoulder or turnout	
	Preferred	Minimum	Preferred	Minimum
Rural highway Daily traffic volume over 10,000	>12'	12'	8" to 12"	0"
Rural highway Daily traffic volume between 1,500 to 10,000	12'	10'		
Rural road Daily traffic volume 100 to 1,500	10'	8'		
Rural road Daily traffic volume under 100	8'	6'		
Rural road Daily traffic volume under 50 Speed = 40 mph	6'	2'		
Residential street without curb or all-weather shoulder	6'	0'		8" *
Curbed residential street	Not applicable		8" to 12" behind traffic face of curb	6" behind traffic face of curb

\* If a turnout is provided, this may be reduced to zero.

**Table 1: AASHTO recommended guidelines for lateral mailbox placement**

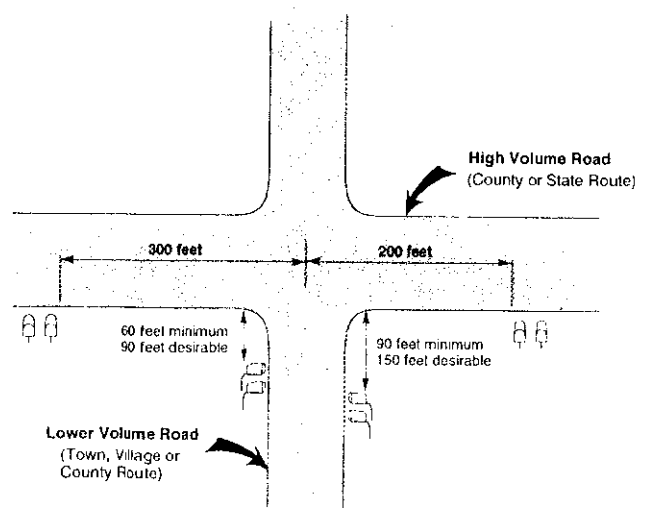
The type of roadway affects the setback of the mailbox. Under no circumstances should the roadside face of the mailbox project onto the usable shoulder or onto the traveled way of the street or road. On major highways with moderate to high speeds, allow sufficient setback so the rural carrier can leave the road to make the delivery. Turnouts with hard surfaces are most desirable. Table 1 shows guidelines for lateral mailbox placement as recommended by AASHTO.

Mailboxes should always be installed on the right side of the road in the direction of the carrier's line of travel, and on the far side of the patron's driveway. Where there is a conflict with guardrails, mailboxes should be installed behind the guardrails, projecting enough for the carrier to reach them.

Figure 6 shows recommended mailbox locations at major intersections.

In some instances following these guidelines may locate the mailbox where blind spots or poor sight distance create a pedestrian hazard. It is a good idea to move the mailbox to a more visible position. However, the postal patron should not have to walk more than 200 feet along the shoulder.

Unfortunately, a large proportion of mailboxes in Wisconsin cannot adhere to the recommended standards because of physical conditions on the local roads. You will have to use judgment in siting such mailboxes, taking safety and convenience into account.



**Figure 6: Mailbox location at major intersections**



## Summary

Local government should encourage safety on the highways it maintains. This includes concern for safe mailbox installations. Local officials may work with property owners and the postal service to develop safe mailbox installations. Property owners should be encouraged to remove unsafe installations. Providing examples of proper installation guidelines can go a long way in promoting safety.

It is vitally important to understand that mailboxes can be obstacles along any roadway. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has established standards that mailbox supports must adhere to, based on requirements in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*. These standards apply not only immediately along the travelway, but also in adjacent

clear zones, areas which must be clear of obstacles for vehicle safety.

The AASHTO manual, *A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways*, can be used for implementing the standards and applications in the *MUTCD*. This includes suggestions for post sizes for different installation types. The Wisconsin D.O.T. has an informational pamphlet for homeowners and detailed installation information.

The Federal Highway Administration is taking an active role in pressing for the application of recommended guidelines for new and replacement installations. In Wisconsin the D.O.T. will be taking a lead role in advising counties of their responsibilities in mailbox installation, relocation, and reinstallation on Federal Aid projects as they come up.

### Suggested items for an ordinance regulating mailbox installation

The intent of the ordinance should be to establish standards for providing safe mailbox installation. The mailbox support and mounting standards recommended here do not conflict with the requirements of the U.S. Postal Service.

1. **Support.** The support should be a wood post, steel pipe, or steel channel installed no more than 24 inches in the ground and extending to a vertical height such that the bottom of the mailbox is a minimum of 42 inches but not to exceed a maximum of 48 inches above the ground surface. The support should be the following dimensions:

- Square wood post: 4 x 4 inch nominal
- Round wood post: 4 inch diameter
- Steel pipe: 1½ inch inside diameter
- Steel channel: 2 pounds per foot

Dimensions exceeding these should be deemed unacceptable and in violation of the ordinance.

The support should not be set in concrete, nor is a base plate acceptable. Anti-twist flanges may be installed on the pipe or channel supports but should not be imbedded more than 10 inches into the ground.

2. **Attachment.** The box-to-post attachment should be sufficient to prevent the separation of the box from the support post when struck.
3. **Multiple mailboxes.** No more than two mailboxes should be mounted on one support post. For a multiple installation, support posts must be spaced a minimum longitudinal distance apart which is equal to three-quarters of the height of the posts in the installation. Thus, for example, in an installation where posts are four feet above ground, they should be spaced three feet apart.
4. **Location.** Mailboxes must be located on the right side of the road. (The left side is permissible on one-way roads or streets.) They should be located on the far side of driveways. The face of the mailbox must not extend over the edge of the traveled way or of a paved shoulder.
5. Installations should avoid blind spots or poor sight distance locations.
6. The Town, Village, City or County will maintain a supply of standard drawings of approved mailbox installations for issuance.



## Sample letter of notification

Once your municipality has adopted a mailbox ordinance, you should start to notify residents with hazardous mailboxes that they will have to move/replace the mailbox and/or support. Plank-mounted, grouped mailboxes are particularly dangerous. Notify the residents by placing a form letter in their mailboxes along with a copy of your municipality's mailbox ordinance and sample plans taken from, or consistent with, the AASHTO guidelines. As a policy you might wish to do this for each non-conforming mailbox support located on a road where you are reconstructing, paving, or improving the shoulder or other portions of the clear zone. Such a policy should be consistent with removal of other important roadside hazards such as trees and utility poles.

Finally, any mailbox for a newly constructed residence should conform with the mailbox ordinance. You can help to ensure this by attaching a copy of the mailbox ordinance to either your department's driveway permit or to your municipality's building permit.

Dear Homeowner,

Mailboxes can be attractive, functional and safe. You determine its attractiveness and beauty. The U.S. Postal Service determines the regulations for mail delivery. The Board of Supervisors, out of a concern for the increasing number of injuries and deaths nationwide from improperly placed mailboxes, has passed the attached ordinance which sets forth standards for the physical location of mailboxes. The ordinance was adopted in order to improve roadside safety for vehicles that might inadvertently leave the roadway.

Unfortunately, your mailbox and/or support does present a hazard to the motoring public. I am asking you to reconstruct and/or relocate your mailbox so that it conforms with the mailbox ordinance. For this portion of (name of road) your mailbox should be a minimum distance of (distance from the edge of pavement, shoulder, etc.). To meet mail delivery needs, the bottom of your mailbox should be \_\_\_\_\_ inches above the ground. Sample plans that conform to the ordinance are also attached.

In accordance with the ordinance you must take appropriate action within 30 days. If you fail to do so, the Highway Department must remove your mailbox and support. If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to call (name of appropriate highway department employee) at (telephone number).

We look forward to working with you to ensure a safe and attractive mailbox. Thank you for your cooperation.

Very truly yours,

Highway Superintendent

*Reprinted from a factsheet published by the Local Roads Program of the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.*

## Resources

AASHTO, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, *A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways*.

*Full Scale Vehicle Crash Tests on Nebraska Rural Mailbox Designs*, Nebraska Department of Roads.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation, *It's nice to be different, but . . .*

*Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.

Literature from the Local Roads Program of the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Cornell University.

*Revised September 1993*

*Wisconsin Transportation Bulletin* is a series of fact sheets providing information to local town, municipal and county officials on street and highway design, construction, maintenance and management. These fact sheets are produced and distributed by the Transportation Information Center, a project of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Engineering Professional Development, with assistance from the Federal Highway Administration, Wisconsin Department of Transportation and UW-Extension. UW-Madison provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX requirements.



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