

**National Committee on  
Uniform Traffic Control Devices**

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**RESCINDED  
JANUARY 2024**  
This Recommended  
Change to the MUTCD  
was rescinded by the  
NCUTCD Council on  
January 12, 2024.



1 **RWSTC June 2012** **RW # 1**

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3 **TECHNICAL COMMITTEE : Regulatory/Warning Sign Subcommittee**

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5 **TOPIC: Signs Placed on Existing Supports**

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7 **STATUS/DATE OF ACTION:**  
8 **TC Drafts** **01/27/2011, 02/01/11, 02/02/11, 07/28/11,**  
9 **05/14/12**  
10 **TC Approval:** 01/18/2012  
11 **Transmitted to Sponsors:** Spring 2012  
12 **RWSTC Approval** 6-20-12  
13 **following sponsor comments**  
14 **Council Approval:** **6-22-12**

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16 **ORIGIN OF REQUEST: Task Force: James Pline(Chair), Ibarguen, Heydel,**  
17 **Paddick, Ranck**

18  
19 **AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD: Section 2A.19 Lateral Offset and Section**  
20 **2A.21 Posts and Mountings.**

21  
22 **SUMMARY:**

23 The 2009 MUTCD makes provision that signs may be placed on existing  
24 supports as follows;

25 **Section 2A.19. Lateral Offset.**

26 Option:

27 07 Where permitted, signs may be placed on existing supports used for other  
28 purposes, such as highway traffic signal supports, highway lighting supports, and utility  
29 poles.

30 **Standard:**

31 08 **If signs are placed on existing supports, they shall meet other placement**  
32 **criteria contained in this Manual.**

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34  
35 This requirement raises a question that if the sign is installed on an existing support  
36 then that support shall meet other placement criteria in the Manual meaning that the  
37 support shall be crashworthy (breakaway, yielding or shielded with a longitudinal barrier  
38 or crash cushion) if within the clear zone. The Manual should not be the document that  
39 upgrades existing supports, ie. Signal, lighting and utility poles, to a crashworthy

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40 installation.

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**RESEARCH:**

44 Research of the previous editions of the Manual found that the 2000 MUTCD  
45 added the following statement in Section 2A.19. Lateral Offset:

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47 **Standard:**

48 **Roadside-mounted sign supports shall be breakaway, yielding, or shielded with a**  
49 **longitudinal barrier or crash cushion if within the clear zone.**

50  
51 This provision was in the proposed rulemaking and received no response to the  
52 proposed change. It is assumed that paragraph "08" was added at the same time under  
53 the same rulemaking since it initially appears in the 2000 MUTCD and is repeated  
54 verbatim in both the 2003 and 2009 Editions.

55 The Manual has recognized that signs can be placed on existing supports  
56 starting with the 1935 Edition and repeated in the 1948, 1961, 1972 and 1978 Editions.  
57 The wording in the 1978 Manual reads as follows;

58 "In some cases, especially in urban districts, signs can be correctly placed on  
59 existing supports used for other purposes, such as traffic signals, street lights,  
60 and public utility poles where permitted, thereby saving expense and minimizing  
61 sidewalk obstructions."  
62

63 **DISCUSSION:**

64 There is no argument that any sign installation made under the provisions of the  
65 Manual shall include posts and mountings that meet the AASHTO "Specifications for  
66 Structural Supports for Highway Signs, Luminaires, and Traffic Signals", Section 2A.21.  
67 However, when a sign is placed on an existing support it is not intended that the support  
68 be upgraded to those same requirements. The need to upgrade any existing supports  
69 along the roadway comes under the preview of the above specifications and the  
70 Roadside Design Guide. The Manual's purpose is to address the installation of traffic  
71 control devices not the crashworthiness of existing supports along the roadway.

72 The Standard statement is not needed since it has nothing to do with the lateral  
73 offset of the sign installation and serves no purpose since the location is prescribed  
74 under other Manual provisions. Additionally, the Option statement permitting use of  
75 existing supports appears more appropriate in either Section 2A.16. Standardization of  
76 Location or Section 2A.21 Posts and Mountings.

77 The Standard statement could cause an undue burden on a jurisdiction requiring  
78 them to upgrade the supporting pole to crashworthy criteria. It has been a long standing  
79 consideration(Since 1935) that when the personnel make a field installation in the  
80 appropriate location if a support pole exists at the location then they can install the sign  
81 on that existing support pole rather than have a separate post next the existing support  
82 pole.

83 This Standard statement provides the inference that the existing support shall be  
84 upgraded to meet the other Manual criteria that includes crashworthiness of the support

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This could open the door for a legal interpretation that an agency was not in compliance with the MUTCD if they failed to upgrade an existing support.

**RECOMMENDED MUTCD PROVISIONS/ REVISIONS:**

89 **Note: Proposed changes to the MUTCD are shown in Underlined red and removed text are**  
90 **shown in ~~strike-through Red~~.**

91  
92 **Delete paragraph (07) and (08) in Section 2A.19 as noted in RED .**

93  
94 **Section 2A.19 Lateral Offset**

95 **Option:**  
96 ~~07 — Where permitted, sign may be placed on existing supports used for other purposes, such~~  
97 ~~as highway traffic signal supports, highway lighting supports, and utility poles.~~

98 **Standard:**  
99 ~~08 — If signs are placed on existing supports, they shall meet other placement criteria~~  
100 ~~contained in this Manual.~~

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102  
103 **Add paragraph (03) and (04) in Section 2A.21 as noted in Red**

104  
105 **Section 2A.21 Post and Mountings**

106 **Standard:**  
107 **01 Sign posts, foundations, and mountings shall be so constructed as to hold signs in a**  
108 **proper and permanent position, and to resist swaying in the wind or displacement by**  
109 **vandalism.**

110 **Support:**  
111 **02 The latest edition of AASHTO’s “Specifications for Structural Supports for Highway Signs,**  
112 **Luminaires, and Traffic Signals” contains additional information regarding posts and mountings**  
113 **(see Page i for AASHTO address).**

114 **Option:**  
115 ~~03 — Where permitted, signs may be placed on existing supports used for other purposes, such~~  
116 ~~as highway traffic signal supports, highway lighting supports, and utility poles.~~

117 **Support:**  
118 ~~04) — See lateral and height placement criteria for Guidance and Standards contained in this~~  
119 ~~Manual. for signs that are placed on existing supports.~~

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121 **RWSTC VOTE 6-20-12**  
122 **FOR: Unanimous**  
123 **AGAINST:**  
124 **ABSTENTIONS:**

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126 **COUNCIL VOTE: For: Unamious**  
127 **Against:**  
128 **Abstentions:**

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130 N-NCUTCD/june 2012/RW #1 Sections 2A.19 and 2A.20 lateral offsets – signs on existing  
161 supports 6-20-12 Revised following sponsor comments APPROVED BY COUNCIL  
152 6-22-12