

From: jbell01@fs.fed.us
To: Ernest <FHWA> Huckaby
Date: 4/11/02 10:57AM
Subject: Re: Coral Incident Signs Update

Ernie: Here's a copy and paste version:

Dear Mr. Huckaby:

The USDA Forest Service requests permission to use high visibility "coral" colored sheeting for traffic warning signs at wildfire incidents in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington beginning this summer.

We understand that use, if authorized, will be considered experimental. We further understand that FHWA will be issuing a notice of proposed rulemaking in the Federal Register this summer regarding proposed revisions to the MUTCD, one of which would be to make "coral" the national standard color for traffic warning signs at incidents. Thus we will be glad to document results of authorized experimental use as necessary to advise your rulemaking. Please let us know what that might entail. We also will be glad to do any coordination you feel is necessary with the state departments of transportation in the four states.

Please contact John Bell at 703-605-4612 or Donna Sheehy at 406-329-3312 regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

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E. VAUGHN STOKES
Director of Engineering

cc: Director of Fire & Aviation Management, Jim Abernathy, John Bell, Donna Sheehy

Not very pretty, but at least you can read it.

John
John W. Bell, PE
National Road System Operations & Mtce Engr, USDA-FS
Phone - 703-605-4612
FAX - 703-605-1542
E-Mail - jbell01@fs.fed.us

1-38 (EX)

From: jbell01@fs.fed.us
To: Cherie <FHWA> Kittle
Date: 4/18/02 10:42AM
Subject: Re: Request for Experimentation

Cherie: I'm reading my e-mail in a hotel in Reno. We're having a national sign workshop for the Forest Service. I'll be back in the office next week.

The letter that you have the draft of probably has already been signed by our office and is going through the process somebody designed to protect Federal agencies from each other's mail. (Irradiation)

I'll check MUTCD when I'm back in Monday and pull up the section you referenced. We'll work on it. It's no big deal to hand carry the plan over to your office via Metro. What's your room number in the DOT building?

Regarding length of time of the experiment, we certainly have no problem about this being at least a year. Depending on how much detail is necessary for the plan, I may have to contact Jim Abernathy and Donna Sheehy, who are two of our Regional Sign/Traffic Engineers who will be helping with this effort. In general, we're figuring on having a couple sets of general incident ICP traffic signs in a fire cache to deploy when we have to set up fire suppression operations for a major fire incident, and we're also figuring on equipping a couple of initial attack fire engines with a couple sets of roll up signs to deploy when they arrive and start work on a new fire start along a highway.

I'll be checking in with you next week.

John
John W. Bell, PE
National Road System Operations & Mtce Engr, USDA-FS
Phone - 703-605-4612
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4646
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"Kittle,
Cherie
<FHWA>"

To: jbell01@fs.fed.us (IPM Return requested) (Receipt notification requested)

cc:

04/18/2002
07:12 AM

Subject: Request for Experimentation

Stop 1101

Mr. Bell:

USDA Forest Service, Engineering Staff
Plan for Experimental Use of "Coral" Incident Management Traffic Signs
April, 2002

In accordance with Section 1A.10 of the MUTCD, the following is submitted:

A. Problem Statement: The USDA Forest Service is responsible for wildfire suppression throughout 192 million acres of National Forest System Lands. Numerous work zone situations result in the course of these fire suppression activities. Examples are suppression operations on or adjacent to roads open to traffic, smoke from wildfires impairing visibility on roads near fires, road closures in and around fire areas, and large volumes of fire suppression related traffic entering and exiting highways at intersections where there is normally little or no traffic. Affected roads may be under Forest Service, state, county, or local jurisdiction.

Traffic signing for wildfire incident operations is required to be in accordance with Part VI of the MUTCD. As such, it is normally orange or fluorescent orange. It is suspected the orange signs are not as effective as possible for two reasons: 1) If a wildfire incident occurs in the area of an existing highway construction work zone, motorists may be unable to discriminate between incident signs and construction signs. 2) There may be a sign credibility problem in areas where inapplicable work zone signing is not faithfully covered or removed.

B. Description of Proposed Change: The FHWA is planning to propose that the color "coral" be adopted in a future revision of Part VI of the MUTCD as the standard color for traffic signs at incidents. "Coral" would replace orange for all incident signing, if the proposal is adopted. The Forest Service is aware of the proposal, believes it may have merit, and is offering to test the concept at wildfire incidents.

C. Illustration: Not applicable.

D. Supporting Data Regarding Development: The Forest Service learned of the FHWA proposal during Mr. Ernest Huckaby's presentation on proposed revisions to the MUTCD at the National Association of County Engineer's annual meeting in March, 2002. Mr. Huckaby is the MUTCD team leader for FHWA. "Coral" is a color identified in the Millennium MUTCD which so far is not assigned to any specific purpose.

E. Are any of these proposed traffic control devices protected by patent or copyright? No.

F. Time period and location of proposed experimental use: The Forest Service proposes to test these signs at wildfire incidents in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington (Forest Service Administrative Regions 1 and 6) during calendar years 2002 and 2003. Wildfire activity is generally limited to the summer and early fall months in these states.

G. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Communication Plan:

1. Use of “coral” signs will be tested in two distinctly different situations:
 - a. Initial attack fire engines. These are fire engines assigned to be the first response to newly reported fires. Test engines will be equipped with roll-up signs to be set out in each direction from where the engine and crew stops to begin fighting a new fire. The sign message will likely be “Fire Activity Ahead”.
 - b. Large fire incidents: These are large fires lasting several days involving hundreds if not thousands of firefighters. Area or national organized incident management teams manage these incidents. The incidents often involve a number of temporary facilities such as a command post, camps, and heliports. A great deal of traffic is generated. Test incidents will be provided with a variety of signage that is typically necessary to meet incident needs. Examples include the standard signs “Stop Ahead” (W3-1a), “Truck Crossing” (W8-6), “Flagger Ahead” (W20-7a), “Be Prepared to Stop” (W20-7b), “Shoulder Work” (W21-5), “Slow Traffic Ahead” (W23-1), and “Pilot Car Follow Me” (G20-4) as well as nonstandard signs such as “Fire Activity Ahead”, “Fire Machinery Ahead”, and “Smoke”.
2. “Control”. In order to provide a direct comparison of experimental signing with standard signing, for each deployment of “coral”, there will be a deployment of standard orange and/or fluorescent orange signing in a comparable situation.
3. Documentation of experimental use:
 - a. A short questionnaire will be developed and distributed with “Coral” signs when they are deployed. The intended audience includes incident operations personnel, incident logistics personnel, and jurisdictional road agency traffic and maintenance personnel. We will ask that the questionnaires be completed and returned to the Forest Service regional sign coordinator.
 - b. Digital photographs will be taken of signing before it is deployed.
 - c. Additional digital photographs will be taken of signing while deployed.
 - d. Detailed sign layout information will be collected for nonstandard signs.
 - e. Collected information will be sent to the FHWA MUTCD team semiannually at the end of November and May.
4. Communication plan:

- a. Upon FHWA approval of this experiment, Forest Service Regional Sign Coordinators will contact the State Traffic Engineers of the four states to inform them of the study and ascertain what interest they may have in participating. (We would welcome their participation.)
- b. A flyer will be prepared and distributed with experimental signs to explain the experiment to interested persons and tell them how they can comment.
- c. A special packet will be prepared for the public affairs officer at large wild fire incidents where the signs are deployed. Besides containing the interested persons flyer and this experiment plan, the packet will ask the PAO to collect any reports from local media about the use of the signs and relay those reports to the Regional Sign coordinators.

H. Restoration of Sites: Signs will be removed upon completion of fire incident operations. In addition, the Forest Service will terminate the experiment anytime it determines significant safety concerns are directly or indirectly attributable to the experimentation. The Forest Service also understands that FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations has the right at any time to terminate the experimentation based on safety concerns.

I. Progress Reports: Semi annual progress reports will be provided to FHWA as noted in Section G3e above.

J. Forest Service Contacts:

1. National – John Bell, National HQ. 703-605-4612.
2. Idaho and Montana – Donna Sheehy, Region 1. 406-329-3312
3. Oregon and Washington – Jim Abernathy, Region 6. 503-808-2099