

Federal Highway Administration
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

March 5, 2002

Refer to: HOTO-1

Dr. John E. Tidwell
Transportation Engineering Consultant
5017 Lanier Drive
Greenbrier, TN 37073

Dear Dr. Tidwell:

Thank you for your October 29, 2001, letter requesting an interpretation on the use of the LOOK sign (R15-8) with various signs at highway-rail grade crossings. We apologize for the delay in responding to your request. All first class mail sent through the United States Postal Service to Federal agencies in the District of Columbia must be processed in a special way to protect government employees from the possibility of handling anthrax-tainted mail. The irradiation process delays delivery by several weeks.

The intent of the LOOK sign (R15-8) is to provide additional emphasis to drivers when and where to look for trains at highway-rail (or highway-light rail transit) grade crossings, specifically within the immediate area of the crossing (i.e., within the railroad's or light rail transit's right of way). If the LOOK sign is located too far in advance of the crossing, a possibility exists that the sight distance may not be adequate to see the train. A driver could look for a train too far in advance of the grade crossing, and assume either (1) there is no approaching train, or (2) the crossing has been abandoned since there are no tracks in the vicinity. The Advanced Warning Sign (W10-1) is designed to alert and prepare drivers that there is a crossing ahead.

Regarding the additional recommendation included in your letter, the MUTCD states that the "No Signal" sign (W10-10) may be used as a supplemental plaque to the Advanced Warning Sign (W10-1) at crossings that do not have active warning devices. The MUTCD also states the LOOK sign may be used as a supplemental plaque to the Crossbuck Sign (R15-1).

The removal of the LOOK sign is currently under review by FHWA, based on comments received that the use of the sign is confusing.

We have assigned the following official interpretation number and title to your request:
8-60(I)--"Use of LOOK Sign (R15-8) with Various Signs at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings."
Please refer to this number in future correspondence. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Mrs. Debra Chappell on 202-366-0087.

Sincerely yours,

Shelley J. Row, P.E.
Director, Office of Transportation
Operations