Preface

Roadway signs in the United States increasingly use symbols rather than words to convey their message. Symbols provide instant communication with roadway users, overcome language barriers, and are becoming standard for traffic control devices throughout the world. Familiarity with symbols is essential for all roadway users in order to maintain the safety and efficiency of our transportation facilities.

The color of roadway signs is an important indicator of the information they contain. The use of red on signs is limited to stop, yield, and prohibition signs. A white background indicates a regulatory sign; yellow conveys a general warning message; green shows permitted traffic movements or directional guidance; fluorescent yellow/green indicates pedestrian crossings and school zones; orange is used for warning and guidance in roadway work zones; and blue is used for incident management signs. Blue indicates road user services, tourist information, and evacuation routes; and brown is for guidance to sites of public recreation or cultural interest.

Sign shape can also alert roadway users to the type of information displayed on a sign. Traffic regulations are conveyed in signs that are rectangular with the longer direction vertical or square. Additional regulatory signs are octagons for stop and inverted triangles for yield. Diamond-shaped signs signify warnings. Rectangular signs with the longer direction horizontal provide guidance information. Pentagons indicate school zones. A circular sign warns of a railroad crossing.

The illustration below shows how the shape and color of a sign indicate the nature of the message.

Test your Sign IQ by taking the interactive shape and color quiz available on the web at http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov. On the navigation bar under Knowledge, select Sign Shape/Color.

Standards for the design and application of the signs shown here as well as for other traffic control devices are contained in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Dimension drawings for signs can be found in the Standard Highway Signs book. Both of these books are available in electronic format online at http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov. This website also contains information on standard lettering used on highway signs and pavement markings and how to use sign color specifications.

Hard copies of the MUTCD can be purchased from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (http://www.aasho.org); the Institute of Transportation Engineers (http://www.ite.org); the American Traffic Safety Services Association (http://www.atssa.com); and the US Government Printing Office (http://www.gpo.gov). The Standard Highway Signs book can be purchased from the US Government Printing Office and the American Traffic Safety Services Association through the web sites listed above.

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*The use of coral for incident management signs was anticipated for inclusion in the 2003 edition of the MUTCD at the time of this printing.
Warning Signs

`* This sign was anticipated for inclusion in the 2003 edition of the MUTCD at the time of this printing.`

Temporary Traffic Control Signs
Railroad and Light Rail Transit Grade Crossing Signs

RARAILROAD CROSSING AHEAD (W10-1)
RAILROAD CROSSBUST (R15-1)
DO NOT PASS (W10-5)
LOW GROUND CLEARANCE ON TRACK (W10-5)
HIGHWAY RAIL CROSSING ON SIDE ROAD TO RIGHT (W10-2)

(W10-11) LIMITED VEHICLE STORAGE SPACE BETWEEN INTERSECTION AND TRACKS
(W10-11a) LIGHT RAIL ONLY LANE (R15-4a)

XX FEET BETWEEN TRACKS & HIGHWAY (R10-7)

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT STATION AHEAD (I-12)
LIGHT RAIL VEHICLE APPROACHING (W10-7)
DIVIDED HIGHWAY TRANSIT RAIL CROSSING (R15-7)

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SIGN FOR VEHICLE STALLED ON TRACKS (0-13)

TO REPORT STALLED VEHICLE ON TRACKS OR OTHER EMERGENCY CALL 1-888-446-3117 AND REFER TO CROSSING 4000-XXXX ON STREETNAME RD

NO TRAIN HORN (W10-9)
NO SIGNAL AT TRACKS (W10-10)

LOOK BOTH WAYS AT TRACK (R15-8)

LOOK (R13-1)

Temporary Traffic Control

WORKER AHEAD (W21-1a)
FLAGGER AHEAD (W20-7a)
RIGHT SHOULDER CLOSED (W10-5a)
RIGHT TWO LANE CLOSED 1/2 MILE (W20-5a)

NO TRAIN HORN (W10-9)
NO SIGNAL AT TRACKS (W10-10)

ROAD WORK NEXT 5 MILES (W30-1)
Guide Signs

- INTERSTATE ROUTE MARKER (M1-1)
- U.S. ROUTE MARKER (M1-4)
- STATE ROUTE MARKER (M1-5)
- NATIONAL FOREST ROUTE MARKER (M1-7)
- COUNTY ROUTE MARKER (M1-6)
- NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS MARKER (D0-4)
- HURRICANE EVACUATION ROUTE (EM-1)
- DESTINATION DISTANCE SIGN (E7)
- INTERCHANGE ADVANCE EXIT SIGN (E1-1)
- INTERCHANGE EXIT SIGN (E5-16)
- NAMED HIGHWAY (M1-10)
- PARK & RIDE (D4-2)
- MILE MARKER (D10-3)
- ROADWAY IDENTIFICATION AND MILE MARKER* (D10-7)
- ROADWAY IDENTIFICATION AND MILE MARKER MEASURED TO ONE-TENTH OF A MILE* (D10-8)
- TRENTON 1 MILE
- JUNCTION (M2-3)
- MUST EXIT LANE (E11-1)
- EXIT ONLY

Diagammatic Guide Sign

*This sign was anticipated for inclusion in the 2003 edition of the MUTCD at the time of this printing.

COLOR-CODED GUIDE SIGNS. THE COLORED SQUARES AID ROADWAY USERS IN DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN MULTIPLE, POTENTIALLY CONFUSING DESTINATIONS.