

Mailboxes (1 of 2)

ROADSIDE

DESCRIPTION AND DEFINITION

Provide breakaway mailbox supports for new installations, as part of rehabilitation projects, and when new homes and businesses apply for entrance culverts.

ROADWAY OPERATIONS

Installation of the swing-away design mailbox support has no effect on traffic operations. However, the swing-away design benefits snowplow operations by allowing more maneuverability of the snowplow with less chance of hitting the support and damaging the mailbox.

TYPICAL COSTS

Implementation Costs = \$100 to \$200 per mailbox support

SAFETY CHARACTERISTICS

A review of crash data for roadways in the State of Minnesota from 2001 to 2010 found an average of 85 crashes per year involving a mailbox support, with an average of 3 severe crashes per year.

The MN MUTCD requires that all roadside sign supports in clear zones be breakaway, yielding or shielded by a barrier or crash cushion. State Statute 169.072 considers any mailbox not meeting breakaway requirements to be a road hazard and gives agencies the ability to remove non-conforming mailboxes. A review of rural roadways in northern Minnesota shows that there is an equal chance of a vehicle leaving the road to hit a mailbox as there is to hit a roadway sign. A preliminary review of the number of signs and the number of mailboxes was conducted on three roadways (Itasca CH 35, TH 6, and Itasca CH 3). Over a total of 16 miles, there were 134 traffic signs and 135 mailboxes. The density of mailboxes was equal to the density of roadway signs. Having crashworthy mailbox supports should be as high of a priority as having crashworthy signs supports.

The MnDOT research has found that the swing-away mailbox assembly meets the requirements of the AASHTO *Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware* for breakaway support structure.

PROVEN, TRIED, INEFFECTIVE, OR EXPERIMENTAL

- The design has been **PROVEN** crashworthy.
- From a crash perspective, using a breakaway mailbox design would be considered **TRIED**—no rigorous evaluations of the deployment were found in the literature.

TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CANDIDATE LOCATIONS

Examples of candidate mailbox replacement opportunities are shown below. Steel tractor wheels, milk cans filled with concrete, chains, and massive I-beams are only a few of the devices used to support mailboxes. Agencies can develop a policy that replaces existing mailbox structures with the MnDOT Standard Swing-Away design during reconstruction, resurfacing, or new access permitting processes.



Examples of Unacceptable Installations

Mailboxes (2 of 2)

ROADSIDE



Examples of Acceptable Installations

DESIGN FEATURES

Mailbox supports should:

- Yield or collapse if struck
- Bend or fall away from the vehicle
- Not create severe deceleration
- Not be set in concrete
- Resist damage from snow removal operations
- Not be fitted with an anchor plate (metal post)
- Not block sight distance

MnDOT's Standard Plate 9350-A provides the design for the swing-away mailbox support that accomplishes these goals.

BEST PRACTICE

The important features of an approved, conforming mailbox design include the following: (1) the post located a minimum of 3 feet from the edge of the road shoulder, (2) the front of the mailbox located above the edge of the shoulder, (3) the bottom of the box at the proper height (normally 38 to 42 inches; check with the mail carrier), and (4) an installation that will pivot or rotate in some fashion when a snowplow hits the mailbox.

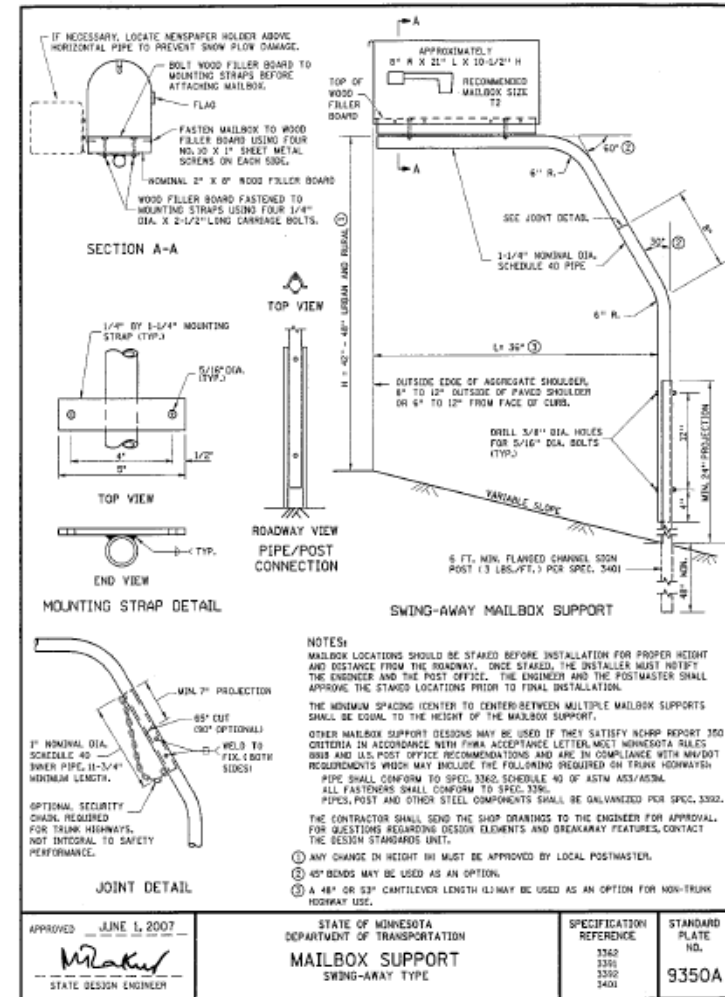
SOURCES

MnDOT's Standard Plate 9350A

Crash Tests of Minnesota Mailbox Supports, LRRB 1981-08, Althea, A. and Ross, R., July 1981.

Urban Mailbox Installation Guidelines, Minnesota Local Road Research Board, Report MN/RC 2010MAIL, July 2010.

Is Your Mailbox a Hazard? Minnesota Local Road Research Board, Brochure, 2010.



MnDOT's Standard Plate 9350A

Mailboxes Policy (1 of 2)

ROADSIDE

The purpose of this policy is to establish uniformity and consistency in the application, installation, and maintenance of mailbox supports on the <Insert Agency>'s roadway system.

It is the goal of <Insert Agency> to provide public rights-of-way for the travelling public that are safe, efficient, and free of unnecessary hazards, while providing minimum inconvenience to property owners. Minnesota law declares certain mailbox installations to be a public nuisance, a road hazard, and a danger to the health and safety of the travelling public (Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818), and authorizes the road authority to remove and replace the nonconforming supports (Statute 169.072).

DEFINITIONS

The important features of an approved, conforming mailbox design for rural roadways include the following:

1. The post located a minimum of 3 feet from the edge of the road shoulder
2. The front of the mailbox located above the edge of the shoulder
3. The bottom of the box at the proper height (normally 38-inch minimum to 42-inch maximum—check with the mail carrier)
4. An installation that will pivot or rotate in some fashion when a snowplow hits the mailbox

POLICY

The <Insert Agency> will replace all nonconforming mailbox supports as part of a reconstruction/resurfacing project. The county/city will continue to monitor existing mailbox supports and notify owners of their noncompliance and offer installation of approved supports for a fee. Mailbox supports will be provided to landowners as part of the entrance permit process; all new developments will receive new mailbox supports.

POLICY CRITERIA

Replacement of Mailbox Supports under County Highway Improvement Program

<Insert Agency> will provide and install, at the county's expense, conforming mailbox supports within the limits of all <Insert Agency> highway reconstruction and highway resurfacing projects. The county/city is able to provide this service only on reconstruction/resurfacing projects since they are an eligible state aid expense and are therefore reimbursable.

Replacement of Unlawful Mailbox Supports and Installations

Any mailbox support deemed unlawful by the <Insert Agency> Highway Department, as defined by Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818, must be replaced. Once a support is deemed unlawful, the owner will be notified in writing that the owner must replace if within 60 days. As an incentive to use approved supports, the county/city provides the following options:

1. The owner may purchase the support from the county/city at the current rate, install it him- or herself, and remove the unlawful support.
2. The county/city will furnish and install an approved support for the fee currently in effect.

An unlawful support remaining after the expiration of the 60-day period will be removed and replaced by the county/city at the owner's expense—up to \$75.00—to cover the costs incurred.

Mailboxes Policy (2 of 2)

ROADSIDE

Replacement of Damaged Mailbox Supports by Agency

The Highway Department will replace all lawful mailbox supports damaged by county/city equipment during snowplowing operations or other maintenance activities provided the support was properly installed according to U.S. Postal and <Insert Agency> Highway Department standards. The county/city will not replace supports damaged by third parties.

Mailbox Support Requirements—Access Permits

The <Insert Agency> Highway Department will require that all mailbox supports associated with the issuance of an access permit be constructed in accordance with the Department's specifications for lawful supports. The property owner will pay for the cost of the supports. The county/city will furnish and install an approved support for the fee currently in effect. The owner may opt to purchase the support from the county/city at the current rate, and install it him- or herself.

Miscellaneous Attachments to Mailbox Supports

Newspaper delivery boxes, advertisement delivery boxes, nameplates, address plates, etc., must not be installed underneath the mailbox, whether attached to the mailbox support or on a separate post. The area underneath the mailbox must remain free of obstructions in order to allow the unhindered passage of the snowplow wing blade. Obstacles interfering with the wing blade force the plow to swerve, often into the oncoming lane, creating an unsafe situation for motorists and plow operators.

Ownership of Mailbox Supports

Mailboxes and mailbox supports are the property of the mail route patron. <Insert Agency> does not issue written permits for the placement of mailboxes within the road right-of-way, nor does its easements provide for mailbox construction. All mailboxes placed within the road right-of-way are placed there at the owner's risk. Replacement or installation of mailbox supports by the county does not signify any change of ownership. The support remains the property of the owner, and it is the owner's responsibility to maintain to conformance standards.

Interruption of Mail Delivery

When the county/city must remove and replace a mailbox support, it must be done in such a manner as to cause no interruption of mail delivery, if at all possible.

Spacing of Mailbox Supports

In accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818, mailbox supports shall be spaced no closer than 30 inches.

Call Before You Dig (Gopher State One Call)

Forty-eight hours before installation of any new mailbox support, contact the Gopher State One Call for utility locates (1-800-252-1166).

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The new mailbox supports that have been installed by <Insert Agency> become and remain the property of the owner upon completion of the installation. Maintenance of mailbox supports becomes the responsibility of the owner. Mailboxes are the owner's responsibility and must conform to U.S. Postal Service requirements.