



STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
800 BAY ROAD
P.O. BOX 778
DOVER, DELAWARE 19903

CAROLANN WICKS, P.E.
SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Users of the Delaware Manual On Traffic Control Devices

VIA: Don Weber, P.E. 
Chief Traffic Engineer

FROM: Adam Weiser, P.E., PTOE 
Safety Programs Engineer

DATE: June 12, 2009

SUBJECT: Portable Changeable Message Signs

Portable changeable message signs (PCMS), also commonly known as variable message signs or message boards, are a valuable tool to provide a variety of information to the traveling public in support of incident management, construction activities, adverse environmental conditions, changes in traffic patterns, and special events. However, there have been an increasing number of these devices used within the State of Delaware rights-of-way that do not fulfill these purposes or do not have adequate supporting traffic control devices in place. Improper use of these traffic control devices reduces their overall effectiveness and may constitute a hazard to the traveling public.

The use of portable changeable message signs is governed by Section 6F.55 the Delaware Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). These devices are typically used in support of construction or maintenance activities, special events, incidents or emergencies. In no case should PCMS devices be used in any manner that would constitute advertising. The use of these devices must be approved prior to placement on Delaware's roadways. Users of PCMS devices shall follow the approval procedures documented below:

PCMS Devices in support of construction or maintenance activities:

- The user of the device shall submit a completed PCMS Approval Form (see attached) to the Safety Programs Engineer no less than 48 hours prior to placement of the device. In most instances the safety officer assigned to oversee projects in the area will already be engaged and will approve the use and message content of the PCMS. For capital projects with approved maintenance of traffic plans, a PCMS Approval Form is not required unless otherwise directed by the

district Safety Officer or a deviation from the approved message or location is required.

- The following information shall be noted on the approval form:
 - Purpose of use
 - Location of device(s)
 - Duration of use
 - Emergency contact information
 - Message(s) to be displayed
- The approval form can be emailed to the Safety Programs Engineer as shown.

PCMS Devices in support of emergencies or incidents:

- Those devices being placed for emergency operations do not require approval prior to placement; however, the Transportation Management Center shall be notified when these devices are placed within the right-of-way.
- The user placing the devices shall provide the following information:
 - Purpose of use
 - Location of device(s)
 - Duration of use
 - Emergency contact information
 - Message(s) to be displayed
- The approval form (not required) can be emailed or faxed to the Transportation Management Center. The information can also be phoned into the TMC at (302) 659-4600

PCMS Devices in support of special events

- The user of the device shall submit a completed PCMS Approval Form (see attached) to the Safety Programs Engineer no less than 48 hours prior to placement of the device.
- The following information shall be noted on the approval form:
 - Purpose of use
 - Location of device(s)
 - Duration of use
 - Emergency contact information
 - Message(s) to be displayed
- The approval form can be emailed to the Safety Programs Engineer as shown.

In addition to the above approval process and the requirements of Section 6F.55 of the Delaware MUTCD, please be aware of the following when using portable changeable message signs:

1. Messages, or series of messages can be preprogrammed into the device, but at no time shall a device display more than two phases of information. Each phase may contain one, two or three lines of copy with a maximum of 8

characters per line in accordance with the latest edition of the Delaware MUTCD. Messages shall be approved in advance as described above and will be in accordance with Section 2A.07 of the Delaware MUTCD.

2. Upon placing the portable changeable message sign within the rights-of-way, the party placing the board shall contact the TMC (302-659-4600 or by 800 MHz on the statewide TMC channel) to provide or confirm the actual installed location, duration of use and emergency contact information.
3. Changeable message signs identified within the rights-of-way of the State of Delaware that are not approved shall be removed by DelDOT forces from the right-of-way immediately in accordance with Title 17, §525 of the Delaware Code. PCMS devices that are removed from the right-of-way may be subject to fining and recovery fees in accordance with Title 17, §525 of the Delaware Code.
4. Changeable message signs that have been approved for use but are not being used consistent with the approval or those devices that do not have the adequate traffic control devices in their support shall require corrective actions by the applicant as deemed necessary by the Chief Traffic Engineer or designee. Corrective action shall be completed as soon as possible, but no less than 24 hours after notification. Failure to perform the corrective action will result in removal of the PCMS device in accordance with Item 3, above.
5. Portable changeable message signs shall be used as a supplement to and not as a substitute for conventional signs and pavement markings, except for emergency situations.
6. Six (6) channelizing devices (drums or cones) shall be provided to close the shoulder in advance of each Portable Changeable Message sign located within the shoulder during the daytime.
7. When a portable changeable message sign will be on site at night, drums shall be utilized, and one (1) amber Type B light shall be provided on each of the first two drums. If all of the drums meet the new sheeting requirements, lights shall not be utilized. (See Section 6F.62 of the Delaware MUTCD for drum sheeting requirements)
8. All Portable Changeable Message signs no longer in use shall be removed from the work area within 24 hours, unless otherwise authorized by the Chief Traffic Engineer or designee.
9. The text of the messages shall not flash or scroll unless approved by the Chief Traffic Engineer or designee.

