New Traffic Sign Maintenance Requirements

Background
The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, or MUTCD, establishes uniformity and standards for traffic signs on public roads. Recently adopted language in the MUTCD now requires all agencies to adopt a sign maintenance program, which in turn will have agencies meet new minimum retroreflectivity requirements for the traffic signs they have installed.

All agencies, large and small, that own and maintain traffic signs, are required to adhere to these new requirements for their traffic signs. Implementing these new requirements may also involve beginning a new sign maintenance program.

Compliance Dates
By this date, all agencies will have to establish and implement a sign maintenance program that addresses the minimum retroreflectivity requirements.

January 2013
By this date, all agencies must comply with the new retroreflectivity requirements for the traffic signs they have installed, including all red and white and blue and black “regular” signs (with or without background), and green and yellow “historic” signs, and ground-mounted green and white “guide” signs (except street name signs).

January 2012
By this date, all agencies must comply with the new retroreflectivity requirements for overhead guide signs and all street name signs.

January 2009
By this date, all agencies will have to establish and implement a sign maintenance program that addresses the minimum retroreflectivity requirements.

New MUTCD Language
The specific language of the minimum requirements are as follows:

New MUTCD Section 2A.09 Maintaining Minimum Retroreflectivity

Support:
Public agencies or officials having jurisdiction shall use an assessment or management method that is being used, or an agency or official having jurisdiction would be in compliance with the above Standard even if there are some individual signs that do not meet the minimum retroreflectivity levels at a particular point in time.

Except for those signs specifically identified in the Option portion of the Section, one or more of the following assessment or management methods should be used to maintain sign retroreflectivity:

1. Visual Nighttime Inspection
   - The retroreflectivity of an existing sign is assessed by a trained sign inspector conducting a visual inspection from a moving vehicle during nighttime conditions, and is usually determined before the minimum levels should be replaced.

2. Measured Sign Retroreflectivity
   - Retroreflectivity Toolkit – measured using a retroreflectometer.
   - Support: New MUTCD Section 2A.09 Maintaining Minimum Retroreflectivity
   - The retroreflectivity of an existing sign is assessed by a trained sign inspector conducting a visual inspection from a moving vehicle during nighttime conditions, which is usually determined before the minimum levels should be replaced.

3. Replacement of signs in the field is based on the performance of a sample of control signs. The control signs might be a small sample located in a maintenance yard or a sample of signs in the field. The control signs are monitored to determine the effect of retroreflectivity levels.

5. Blanket Replacement
   - The age of a sign is known. The age of the sign is compared to the expected sign life. The expected sign life is based on the experience of sign retroreflectivity degradation in a geographic area compared to the minimum levels. Signs older than the expected life should be replaced.

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