

POLICY ON THE USE OF THE DEER WARNING SIGN

May 1, 2012

Background:

To the best of our knowledge, there are no published reports demonstrating that the standard deer warning sign (W11-3) is effective in reducing the frequency of vehicle-deer crashes. In fact, a 2008 report published by the FHWA concluded just the opposite: "Based on the available data, standard deer warning signs are concluded to be ineffective in reducing wildlife vehicle collisions, in general, and deer vehicle collisions, in specific." (1) This is consistent with the experience of most passive warning signs since motorists tend to ignore them in the absence of evidence. As a result, there is little consistency amongst Midwestern states in the use of the W11-3. One state is removing signs statewide and only using at problem areas at the discretion of the district engineer. Another state quit using the sign entirely about 20 years ago. A third installs signs at the recommendation of the state wildlife agency. Finally, two others have minimum crash thresholds to warrant signs. For the past ten-plus years KDOT applied a minimum crash threshold that was much too low and resulted in too many signs being installed statewide. Warning signs for intermittent dangers such as a deer are most effective when used sparingly. Therefore, to try to establish a more effective warning system, the use of deer warning signs should be limited to those locations with a significant history of deer crashes.

Minimum crash threshold:

Based on available crash data from 2004 thru 2009, a threshold of 5 crashes in one quarter mile per year or 15 crashes per mile per year would result in about 10 sets of signs statewide. (3 and 10 is the former policy.) The Highway Safety Unit in the Bureau of Transportation Safety & Technology will prepare a deer crash map showing these locations for use by the districts. The map will show three years of data, however a location will only need to meet the threshold for one calendar year to appear. The map will be updated annually after the previous year's crash records are closed and posted on KDOT's intranet for use by district personnel.

Application:

Existing signs will be removed by attrition, including damage, age, construction project, etc. The existing sign will be replaced if the location is shown on the most recent deer crash map; the sign may also be replaced at the discretion of the District Engineer.

New signs will be installed when brought to our attention and if shown on the most recent deer crash map; new signs may also be installed at the discretion of the District Engineer. For all new signs installed at the discretion of the District Engineer (i.e. not on the deer crash map), he or she will provide the location and justification to the Highway Safety Unit for their records. Once installed, the sign will be treated as an existing sign.

This policy is reactive by design for reasons noted under background. KDOT will not actively promote the use of deer warning signs.

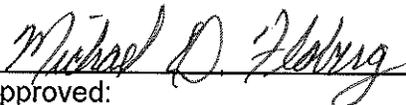
Education:

We will continue to promote educational campaigns such as PSAs during the fall mating season.

ITS boards and portable message boards should not be used for deer messaging.

- (1) "Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Study: Report To Congress", FHWA Report No. HRT-08-034, Huijser et al., August 2008.

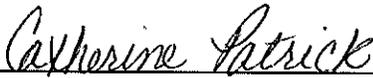
This policy supersedes the policy on deer warning signs established in the July 1, 1998 Highway Sign Manual.



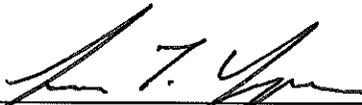
Approved:
Michael D. Floberg, P.E.
Chief of Transportation Safety & Technology



Approved:
Chris J. Herrick, P.E.
Director of Planning & Development



Approved:
Catherine Patrick, P.E.
Director of Operations



Approved:
Jerome T. Younger, P.E.
Deputy Secretary and
State Transportation Engineer