

## KENTUCKY MANUAL ON UNIFORM TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

by

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The 1966 Session of the General Assembly enacted KRS 189.337, a new statute dealing with uniform traffic control devices in Kentucky. This Law, its implementation, and its future relationship to certain county activities are the subjects of my discussion with you today.

The Law is brief, and I would like to read it to you now:

"189.337 Traffic control signs, uniform standards to be prescribed; sign to conform.

1. As used in this section "Official Traffic Control Devices" shall mean all signs, signals, markings, and devices placed or erected by authority of a public body or official having jurisdiction, for the purpose of regulating, warning, or dividing traffic.
2. The Department of Highways shall promulgate and adopt a manual of standards and specifications for a uniform system of official traffic control devices for use upon all roads and streets. The manual and its future revisions and supplements shall be applicable to all roads and streets under the control of the Department of Highways or any county or incorporated city.
3. All traffic control devices installed on any road or street after the adoption of the manual shall conform to the provisions thereof. Satisfactory operating traffic devices in use on the date of the adoption of the manual may continue to be used, however, if such devices are replaced or revised, they must be replaced or revised in conformance with the provisions of the manual. (1966, c. 46, Sections 1 to 3)"

You will note that the provisions of the Law are applicable to all devices on all roads and streets, whether under State, county, or city control. Please note also that its provisions are applicable to all devices installed after the adoption of the Manual.

The Law directed the Department of Highways to prepare and adopt a manual. This has been done, and copies are being distributed to all mayors and county judges in Kentucky. In preparing this Kentucky Manual, the Department's traffic engineers leaned heavily on the National Manual, which has guided our work for many years. You will note that this National Manual has the sponsoring support of national associations of both city and county officials, as well as State and Federal agencies.

This Law does not require a city or a county to erect traffic control devices. However, it does require that any devices which are erected must meet the provisions of the Kentucky Manual. This means not only that the STOP sign you erect must be reflectorized or illuminated and red and white on an octagonal shape of a certain size, but that traffic engineering conditions or State or local law must justify the need for the STOP sign. In other words, usage criteria are spelled out, as well as standard shapes, sizes, colors, mounting heights, etc.

Why do we need a Law and a Manual like these? The most frequent answer is "uniformity", although uniformity is not an end in itself. There is so much widespread travel today that motorists must be able to instantly recognize and understand our signs, signals and markings wherever they see them. When the State Highway Department erects a NARROW BRIDGE sign, the motorist has a right to expect that it means the same thing here as it would in advance of a county narrow bridge, or a California narrow bridge. When a no-passing yellow line is put on the pavement in Kentucky, it must follow the same standards as the ones the motorist saw that same day in Ohio or Tennessee. If it doesn't, then not only his driving comfort but his driving safety is sure to suffer.

Usage requirements are especially important in connection with traffic signals, for experience has proven that they are not cure-alls for an intersection's ills. Signals can actually increase the frequency of certain types of accidents; this is why the Manual has several "Warrants" which must be met before signals can be installed. When traffic and engineering conditions at an intersection warrant a signal, then the Manual sets out the visible and functional requirements which the equipment must meet. Light transmission and color properties of the green, amber and red lenses are specified, as well as the positioning of these lenses. Display sequences are set out, to insure safe clearance intervals and to avoid confusion caused by multiple displays. There is no attempt to limit the choices of commercial equipment, so long as the functional requirements are satisfied.

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that many States have had laws like our for many years. The benefits of such laws are deemed



so important that one of the 13 standards adopted under the Federal Highway Safety Act will apparently require all States to have them. It appears, therefore, that we would have been required to have such a law, whether we chose to or not.

At this point, you may wonder how the Law will be enforced, and what are the penalties for non-compliance. To the best of my knowledge, there will be no enforcement by any agency of State government, and there are no penalties set up in the Statutes. It is our opinion, however, that penalties in the form of liability judgments could be quite severe. For example, assume that a county installs a yellow STOP sign next week at an intersection. It is non-standard, for the Manual requires the red background. Assume that two vehicles subsequently collide at the intersection, resulting in a lawsuit between the parties. It doesn't take much imagination to visualize a sharp defense attorney bringing the county and its officials into the case on charges of negligence for not complying with the Law. Incidentally, the cost of good, uniform devices is only slightly higher than the cost of homemade, make-shift devices.

I will also invite your attention to the fact that our Manual is in loose-leaf form, to facilitate revisions which may be required by State law changes or changes in national engineering standards. The Department will maintain a listing of all officials who receive the Manual, and will forward all subsequent revisions to them as required. We will also always welcome any constructive criticism or proposals for revision from any users of the Manual.

We invite you to bring any questions you may have to the attention of our District Engineers, or to the central office. We will do all we can to help you in carrying out the provisions of the Manual.