



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Smith Chief Deputy

Political or Advertising Signs along Streets and Highways

Many are not aware that there are certain restrictions regarding the placement of signs along streets and highways throughout the State of Wisconsin. Most often we see these violations occurring prior to elections of public officials, but we also see violations when signs are erected for community events, job postings and other informational signs. Certainly those putting up signs should always be aware of the laws prior to placing these signs but property owners who put up the signs should also be aware of the laws as they are ultimately responsible for placement on or near their property.

First, it is very important to remember that prior to placing any sign that you must obtain permission from the landowner prior to the placement. Secondly, prior to placing a sign along streets or highways you must know where the right-of-way is to ensure that you never illegally place a sign within the right-of-way.

There are various different rules governing placement of signs but generally the right-of-way consists of two basic areas. First, if you are erecting a sign in a city or village where there is a sidewalk present, you must place the sign on the side of the sidewalk closest to your home. The terrace or section of grass between the street and the sidewalk is considered right-of-way and is prohibited. If you are erecting a sign outside of a city, village or area without a sidewalk it is important to keep your sign at a distance from the road which is beyond the ditch or where utility poles or markers are generally placed.

An area in which many people forget about is at rural county or state highway intersections. At these intersections the right-of-way extends typically at a 45° angle from one highway to the other and is set back significantly from the intersection to create an area for clear visibility at those intersections. These right-of-ways are often marked with yellow posts to show where the right-of-way is.

Additionally, it is a little known fact that under Wisconsin state statute 346.41 it is illegal to display red or amber reflectors within the right-of-way or at the entrance to a private road or driveway. Under Wisconsin statute, it is required that reflectors at these locations shall be blue in color.

So what happens if a sign is displayed within the right-of-way? Under Wisconsin statute or by ordinance the highway department or public works department have the authority to order the

removal of illegal signs. The reason for the removal is simple as it is important to maintain clear visibility along our streets and highways for the safe passage of the motoring public.

I ask that all community members closely examine the location in which you may be placing signs or banners. Landowners, if someone asks you for permission to place a sign on your property, please give them proper direction on where to legally place those signs.

With many view obstructions such as trees, utility poles, buildings and the designs of our own vehicles already making visibility challenging at times, it is important to all do our part in minimizing additional view obstructions along our roadways. I ask for your assistance so that we can continue to keep our streets and highways safe and keep Dodge County as a safe place to live, work and visit.

Dale J. Schmidt
Dodge County Sheriff