

County of Humboldt • Department of Public Works
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Guidelines for the Placement of Election Signs on or near County Roads for Traffic Safety



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Election Signs on or near County Highways

Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that traffic safety is not compromised with the placement of election signs on or near a road. It is not the information on a sign that affects traffic safety, but the size and location of the sign placement. Signs placed next to driveways and near intersections can affect visibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. When visibility is obstructed or reduced, it increases the chances of a collision. These guidelines are intended to help you place election signs in a manner that does not impact traffic safety.

A few quick tips:

1. Political signs may be placed not more than 90 days before the scheduled election day, and must be removed within 10 days after the election day.
2. Signs are not allowed to be placed within the public road right of way.
3. Signs are not allowed to be placed within the visibility triangle areas located on private property.
4. Think **Safety First** when selecting a location to place a sign. Use common sense when placing signs so that the signs do not obstruct visibility. In addition to considering sight visibility of vehicles on the road, consider the sight visibility from driveways to see pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.
5. Provide copies of this document to all volunteers who are placing signs.
6. If you have questions, please contact us. Traffic safety is our priority.
7. Before installing signs that require excavation, call Underground Service Alert at 811.

Scope of Authority

This policy applies to County-maintained roads in all unincorporated areas of Humboldt County. For all other roads, such as city roads (Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Trinidad) and Caltrans right of ways, contact the entity responsible for the road for their policy.

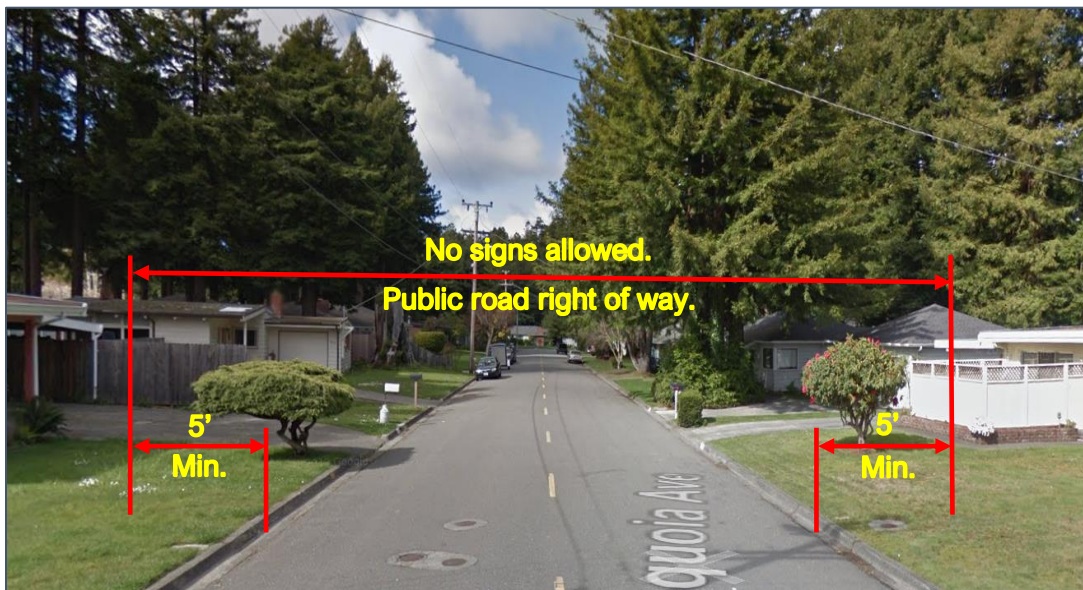
Policy

1. Election signs shall not be placed within a public road right of way. Public road right of ways vary in width from street to street and location to location. Determining the location of the right of way boundary can be a labor-intensive effort. For the purposes of placing election signs, the Department of Public Works has developed a set of right of way assumptions that will be used for enforcement of election signs. These assumptions are as follows:

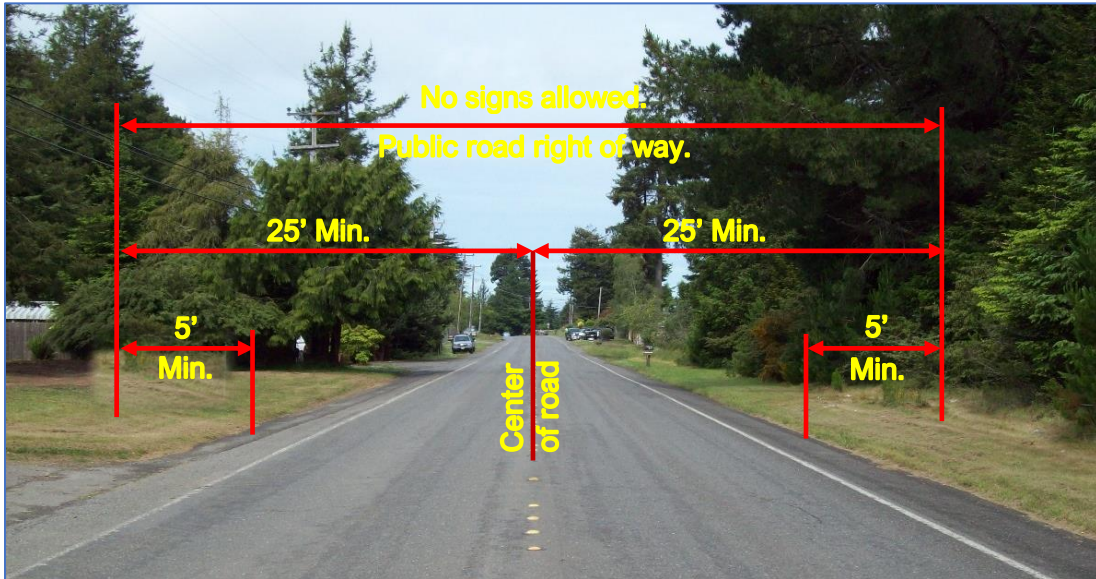
- In urban areas where sidewalk is present, the public road right of way line is assumed to be the back edge of the sidewalk.



- In urban areas with a curb but without sidewalk, the public road right of way is assumed to be five (5) feet back from the face of the curb.



- In areas without a curb, the right of way is assumed to be 25 feet from the center of the developed road or five feet beyond the edge of developed road, whichever is greater.



2. Elections signs may be placed on private property adjacent to a county road provided that the signs comply with the County Visibility Ordinance (County Code Section 341). The Visibility Ordinance regulates heights of objects at road intersections and at driveways in order to protect the field of sight for traffic safety. Signs must be below or above the clear zone area.

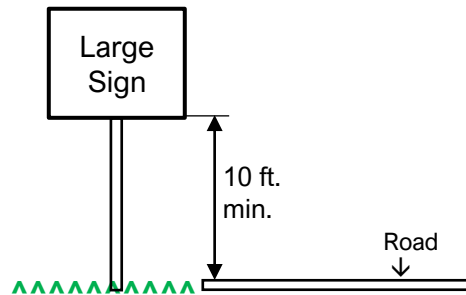
- Visibility triangles can overlap from adjacent driveways and intersections.



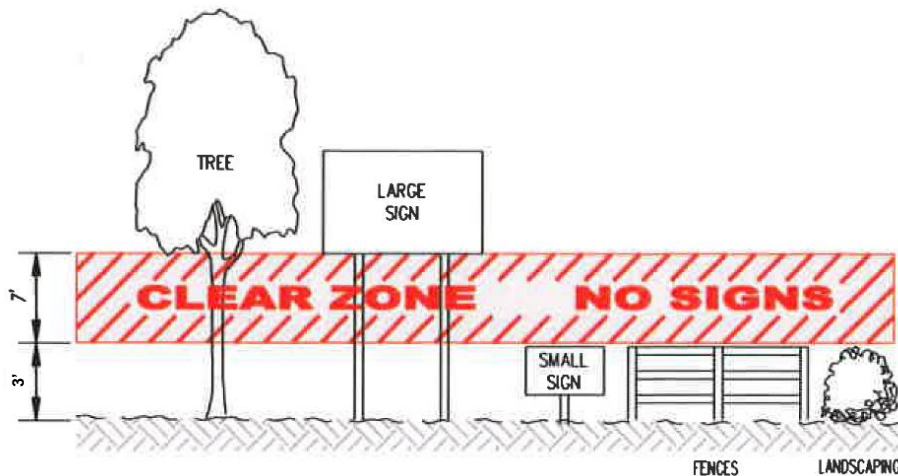
- Within the visibility triangle, signs must be lower than three feet (3') as measured from sidewalk/curb (or the road if no sidewalk or curb is present).



- For Large Signs: Within the visibility triangle, signs must be higher than ten feet (10') as measured from the sidewalk/curb (or the road if no sidewalk or curb is present).



- Maintain Clear Zone: Within the visibility triangle, a clear zone between three vertical feet and 10 vertical feet must be maintained.



Penalties

Public road right of way is defined by Streets and Highways Code Section 1450 as: including “all or any part of the entire width of right of way of a county highway, whether or not such entire area is actually used for highway purposes.”

Unauthorized signs placed in public right of ways are considered encroachments and may be removed by County staff. The sign owner is liable for the costs incurred by the County in removing the sign and any other damages caused by the encroachment (Section 1480.5). If an encroachment is not removed after notice pursuant to Streets and Highways Code Section 1481, a penalty of Ten Dollars (\$10.00) per day for each day the encroachment continues may be assessed (Section 1483).

Placing the sign in the right of way is also a violation of Streets and Highways Code Sections 1460, 1480 et seq. and Penal Code Sections 556 and 556.1, a misdemeanor. Every offense declared to be a misdemeanor is punishable by imprisonment in the County jail not exceeding six (6) months, or by fine not exceeding One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000), or both.

Legal Authority

The County’s authority to regulate the placement of signs on or near public road right of ways, also referred to as ‘county highways,’ is granted by:

- [California Streets and Highways Code Sections 1450 through 1496](#) (within public road right of ways)
- [Humboldt County Code Section 341](#) (on private property adjacent to public road right of ways)
- [Business and Professions Code Section 5405.3](#) (The Outdoor Advertising Act)