

What is allowed in the right-of-way?



What you need to know about right-of-way encroachments

The Kalamazoo County Road Commission (KCRC) reminds residents of policies for encroachments or obstructions in the county road right-of-way.

The Board of County Road Commissioners has a policy to maintain Encroachment and/or Obstructions, including the Accommodation of Mailboxes.

The Board understands encroachments and/or obstructions vary, however items located in the public right-of-way should not interfere with the safety of the traveling public or the maintenance and operation of the road system.

We recognize our time is limited to identify and follow up on all encroachments. Therefore, taking the time to review the road right-of-way and willingly address any issues can prevent headaches later.

The KCRC prohibits and, if necessary, removes any encroachments or obstructions in the county road right-of-way. The encroachments and obstructions range from vegetation, landscape, earthwork, signs, fences, buildings and other objects, including oversized mailboxes or posts.

Specifically, mailboxes are one of the only objects allowed by law to be placed in the road right-of-way.

What you need to know about mailboxes?

- The location and construction of mailboxes must conform to specific rules and regulations.
- Although steel tractor wheels, milk cans filled with concrete, bricks and other items are artistic, they present a serious roadside hazard to motorists.
- They also present a liability risk for residents. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) warns “private individuals and corporation, as well as governmental entities, may be liable for their roles in creating or maintaining highway hazards.”
- Non-conforming mailbox encroachments may pose issues with removal during road projects and are considered an unauthorized use of highway right-of-way.
- Michigan’s state and local road agencies follow the standards published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in the Roadside Design Guide.
- Only one support should be used per box or group of boxes.
- Wood posts should be no more than 4 ½ inches diameter if round, 4x4 inches if rectangular.
- Metal pipes should be standard steel or aluminum with no more than a 2 inch inside diameter.
- Supports should yield or collapse if struck. They should bend or fall away from a vehicle and not create a severe deceleration.
- Supports cannot be fitted with an anchor plate (metal post), embedded over 24 inches into the ground, or set in concrete.
- Mailboxes shall be located on the right-hand side of the roadway in the direction of the delivery route except on one-way streets where they may be placed on the left-hand side. The bottom of the box shall be set at an elevation, established by the United States Postal Service (USPS), usually between 42 inches and 48 inches above the roadway surface.
- Mailboxes shall be constructed of plastic, aluminum and/or lightweight galvanized steel and conforming to requirements of the USPS. Newspaper delivery boxes shall be of light steel or plastic construction of minimum dimensions suitable for holding a newspaper.

These policies are not new to the KCRC or Road Commissions throughout the state.