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Stop Signs

Frequently Asked Questions

Safe, efficient travel on the streets of Milwaukie is a primary concern of the City's Engineering Department. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) helps the Engineering Department determine whether placement of a stop sign or other traffic control device is warranted. As the industry standard, the MUTCD addresses safety and capacity issues at intersections.

What are stop signs used for?



Stop signs are intended to help drivers and pedestrians determine who has the right-of-way at an intersection. In certain circumstances, a stop sign can be a very effective traffic control device. Intersections not controlled by stop signs are subject to the Oregon Right-of-Way Rule, which states that:

A driver when approaching an uncontrolled highway intersection shall look out for and give right-of-way to any driver on the right simultaneously approaching a given point, regardless of which driver first reaches and enters the intersection.

Portable or part-time stop signs are occasionally considered for emergency or temporary traffic control zone purposes.

Criteria for stop signs (two-way)

Because the stop sign causes substantial inconvenience to motorists, it should be used only where warranted. Based on MUTCD guidelines, a stop sign may be warranted at an intersection where one or more of the following conditions exist:

1. Intersection of a less important road with a main road where the application of the normal right-of-way rule is unduly hazardous.
2. Street entering a through highway or street.
3. Unsignalized intersection in a signalized area.
4. Other intersections where a combination of high speed, restricted view, and serious accident record indicates a need for control by the stop sign.

The Engineering Department applies separate MUTCD criteria for multiway stop signs at "T" (3-way) or 4-way intersections.

Can stop signs reduce speeding?

The MUTCD explicitly states that stop signs should not be used for speed control.

Where stop signs are installed as "speed breaks," there is a high incidence of intentional violation or running the stop sign. Most drivers are reasonable and prudent with no intention of violating traffic regulations. However, when an unreasonable restriction is imposed, it can result in flagrant violations. In these cases the stop sign creates a false sense of security for pedestrians and motorists, and this may result in an increase in accidents.

Why not place stop signs at all intersections?

Too many stop signs reduce observance of the right-of-way rule and control of intersections. Furthermore, installation of stop signs at all intersections would be very expensive. More signs in a neighborhood usually result in higher pollution and noise levels.



How do stop signs affect neighborhood traffic patterns?

Experience shows that a stop sign in one location may affect nearby traffic. Drivers may seek new routes to simply avoid the stop sign, thereby causing traffic problems in new areas. The decision to install a stop sign must be made with consideration and care.

Who decides?

The Engineering Department makes signage decisions based on MUTCD guidelines

If you believe your street might benefit from a stop sign, please review the above criteria and then contact the Engineering Department.

If you have concerns related to the enforcement of speeding vehicles or enforcement of existing stop signs, please contact the Milwaukie Police Department at 503-786-7400.