

**POLICY ON
INSTALLATION, REPLACEMENT, AND MAINTENANCE
OF
MAILBOX SUPPORTS**

Adopted by Stearns County Board of Commissioners March 5, 2002.

It is the goal of Stearns County to provide public rights of way for the traveling public that are safe, efficient, and are free of unnecessary hazards, while providing minimum inconvenience to property owners. Minnesota law declares certain mailbox installations to be a public nuisance, a road hazard, and a danger to the health and safety of the traveling public (Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818), and authorizes a road authority to remove and replace such a support (Statute 169.072).

In addition to these requirements, when there is an accumulation of snow, the location of mailboxes close to the highway makes the plowing operations of the County difficult and renders the boxes susceptible to damage. Items attached below the mailbox interfere with the plow's wing blade. It is the County's policy to use special care and consideration when plowing snow in the vicinity of mailbox supports. Despite this care and consideration, some mailboxes will be damaged or destroyed during the snow removal season. In the vast majority of cases it is the weight of the snow coming off the plow or wing blade, which destroys a mailbox. On occasion, however, wings will hit and damage them, especially when oncoming traffic makes it impossible for the plow operator to swerve around the support.

We believe most of the mailbox damage that occurs during a typical winter would be eliminated if postal patrons would install a mailbox support that swings away when hit by snow or snowplow equipment. Attached is a steel post mailbox support diagram, which has been approved for use in Stearns County. This mailbox configuration has been crash tested and is acceptable in terms of nationally tested safety criteria. The use of this approved mailbox support provides a much safer environment for all motorists. It also makes the job of snow removal much easier and reduces cost and irritation to the mail patron when boxes are destroyed due to flying snow.

This policy is intended to minimize damage to mailboxes during snow plowing operations, while providing consistent, convenient access to mailboxes and newspaper delivery. Specific elements of the policy are as follows:

I. Configuration Requirements of Mailbox Supports

All mailbox supports shall be swing-away style, constructed and installed in conformance with the attached detailed drawings and specifications.

II. Call Before You Dig

48 hours prior to installation of any new mailbox support, contact the Gopher State One Call for utility locates (pamphlet attached).

III. Replacement of Mailbox Supports under County Highway Improvement Program

Stearns County will provide and install at the County's expense, conforming mailbox supports within the limits of all Stearns County highway reconstruction and highway resurfacing projects. The County is able to provide this service only on reconstruction/resurfacing projects since they are an eligible state aid expense and are therefore reimbursable.

Where new supports placed under this program remain unused, the County will notify owners in writing that the old support must be removed and the mailbox transferred to the new support within 60 days. After 60 days, remaining old supports will be removed by the County at the owner's expense up to \$75.00.

IV. Replacement of Unlawful Mailbox Supports and Installations

Any mailbox support deemed unlawful by the Stearns County Highway Department, as defined by Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818 (attached), shall be replaced. Once a support is deemed unlawful, the owner will be notified in writing that the owner shall replace within 60 days. As an incentive to use the approved swing-away style support, the County will install all approved swing-away style supports free of charge, one time only. The owner must purchase and supply the approved support. An unlawful support remaining after the expiration of the 60 day time period will be removed and replaced by the County at the owner's expense up to \$75.00 to cover the costs incurred.

V. Replacement of Damaged Mailbox Supports by Stearns County

The Highway Department will replace an approved swing-away style mailbox support damaged by County equipment during snowplowing operations or other maintenance activities provided the support was properly installed according to U.S. Postal and Stearns County Highway Department standards. The County will not replace supports damaged by third parties; however, the County will install at no charge upon request of the owner. The owner must purchase and supply the approved support. The County will not install nonconforming supports.

VI. Mailbox Support Requirements part of Access Permits

The Stearns County Highway Department will require that all mailbox supports associated with the issuance of an access permit be constructed in accordance with the Department's detailed drawings and specifications for swing-away style supports. The property owner will pay for the cost of the support. The County will install the support at County expense, one time only.

VII. Miscellaneous Attachments to Mailbox Supports

Newspaper delivery boxes, advertisement delivery boxes, nameplates, address plates, etc., shall not be installed underneath the mailbox, whether attached to the mailbox support or on a separate post. The area underneath the mailbox shall remain free of obstructions in order to allow the unhindered passage of the snowplow wing blade. Obstacles interfering with the wing blade force the plow to swerve, often into the oncoming lane, creating an unsafe situation for motorists and plow operators. The approved drawings allow for the attachment of delivery boxes to the side of the mailbox. Otherwise, a separate approved support, located no closer than 30 inches, shall be installed at the sole cost of the property owner.

Owners of approved swing-away style mailbox supports with items attached or on separate supports in a nonconforming manner will be notified in writing to correct deficiencies within 60 days. Items not corrected within 60 days will be removed by the County at the owner's expense up to \$75.00.

VIII. Ownership of Mailbox Supports

Mailboxes and mailbox supports are the property of the mail route patron. Stearns County does not issue written permits for the placement of mailboxes within the road right-of-way, nor do our easements provide for mailbox construction. All mailboxes placed within the road right-of-way are placed there at the owner's risk. Replacement or installation of mailbox supports by the County does not signify any change of ownership. The support remains the property of the owner and it is the owner's responsibility to maintain to conformance standards.

IX. Interruption of Mail Delivery

When the County must remove and replace a mailbox support, it shall be done in such a manner as to cause no interruption of mail delivery if at all possible.

X. Spacing of Mailbox Supports

In accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818, mailbox supports shall be spaced no closer than 30 inches.