

**WHERE TO OBTAIN APPLICATION FORMS
AND INFORMATION**

Advertising Management
Office of Traffic and Safety
Iowa Department of Transportation
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50010
Phone: 515-239-1296
Website: www.iowadot.gov/iowaroadsigns



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INTRODUCTION

This guide will acquaint you with Iowa laws regulating outdoor advertising signs along the state's primary highways. It defines various types of outdoor signs and presents the general prohibitions and sign controls that apply to them.

The general prohibitions and sign controls discussed in this guide apply to signs along all primary highways, including signs located in:

- Cities, if they are visible from the primary highway and located within 660 feet of the highway right of way.
- Rural areas, if they are visible from the highway, regardless of their distance from the highway right of way.

The sign controls in this guide do not apply to signs on:

- City streets and county roads that are not visible from the Primary Highway System.
- Interstate and freeway highways, with exception of private directional signing. For information regarding controls on interstate highways, refer to a separate publication titled "Guide to Iowa Outdoor Advertising Regulations for Interstate Highways."

Also in this guide, there is information about outdoor advertising permits, where to obtain application forms, and additional information concerning these permits.



- b. Identify highways and intersecting city streets or county roads on the sign location map.

Identify highways and intersecting city streets or county roads on the sign location map. Indicate the distance from the sign to the pavement. (Measure from the back of the curb or nearest white paint line, not from the road shoulder.)

NOTE: To help process your permit more quickly, reference your sign site to identifiable landmarks, and stake the location.

For specific requirements consult Iowa Code 306C and 761 IAC 117.

Illegal signs

We strive to keep our highways safe and beautiful. If you believe there is a sign illegally erected on private property, please contact us at the phone number listed below. We value public input and will investigate all reports.

- Located within public rights of way or owned by the state or the governing body of a county, city, or other political subdivision of the state.
- Owned by a prohibited contributor under Iowa Code 68A.503, unless the sign advocates the passage or defeat of a ballot issue or is exempted.
- Without the permission of the property owner.
- On the premises of any polling place or voting site on election day, or within 300 feet of its entrance, in accordance with Iowa Code 68A.406.

Real estate signs

Real estate signs intended to advertise financing, development, sale, transfer, lease, exchange, or rent of real property should be displayed upon the premises of the advertised property. Placement on property other than the advertised property requires adherence to all outdoor advertising regulations for off-premise signs (see page 14), and an outdoor advertising permit from the Iowa Department of Transportation. The placement of real estate signs within the public right of way is prohibited.

Personal opinion signs

Signs which display an opinion on a matter may be erected provided the following guidelines are met:

1. The sign must be located on the property of the landowner or resident who holds the opinion stated on the sign.
2. The sign must not be located upon the public right of way.

- The intensity of the illumination does not cause glare or impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle or otherwise interferes with any driver's operation of a motor vehicle.
- LED displays must be located a minimum of 500 feet from any other LED display facing the same direction within cities. LED displays must be located a minimum of 1,000 feet from any other LED display facing the same direction in rural areas.

The following information will help you complete the permit application correctly.

1. **A permit is required for each direction a sign is facing.** However, only one permit is required for a back-to-back sign advertising the same business or service on each face, and no larger than 8 feet in width or height and 32 feet in square area.
2. **Permit fees are set by statute as follows.**

The application fee (nonrefundable), payable at the time of application, is \$100 per advertising face.

The annual renewal fee, due on or before June 30 each year, is based on size of the face and is as follows.

SIZE (sq. feet)	FEE
1-375	\$15
376-999	\$25
Over 1,000	\$50

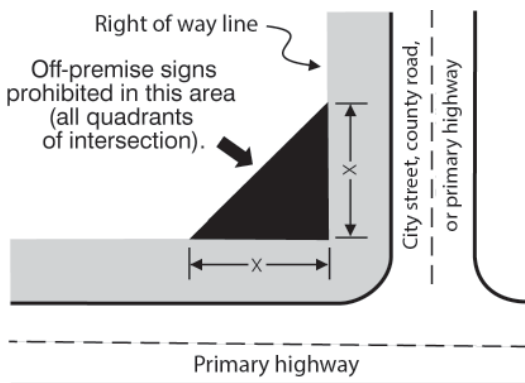
Some exceptions may apply for general main header- type signs in permanently designated research plots leased or owned by agricultural companies. Contact Advertising Management for details.

Special event signs

A special event sign is a temporary advertising device intended to notify the traveling public of community events such as fairs, centennials, festivals, and celebrations. Special event signs are allowed without formal approval from the Iowa Department of Transportation provided the following criteria are met.

1. The event must be administered, hosted, or coordinated by the city, county, chamber of commerce, or area economic development organization for the benefit of the community at large and open to the public.
2. The signs must not exceed 32 square feet in size and must not contain any commercial sponsors in the message.
3. The signs must not be erected on public right of way and permission should be sought from the owner of the property where the signs will be placed.
4. The duration of the sign's placement should be limited to 60 days preceding the event and 24 hours following the end of the event.

Figure 3
Sight distance at intersections
(daylight area)



X = 50 feet in cities X = 100 feet in rural areas

Off-premise signs cannot be located within an interchange area. The first eligible locations are 250 feet beyond the nearest widening used for acceleration or deceleration of traffic to and from the main traveled way (see Figure 4). If two interchanges are close in proximity to one another in such a way that a continuous on- or off-ramp does not require traffic to join the main traveled way between them, the entire area between the interchanges cannot be used for off-premise signs.

- Be erected for the purpose of carrying out an official duty or responsibility.
- Be located beyond the highway right of way at a location that will not obstruct the vision of a driver approaching an intersection.
- Not imitate or resemble traffic control devices governed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- Not contain any commercial message, business name, reference to a private nonprofit organization, or product identification.

Although approval from the Iowa Department of Transportation is not required, local authorities are encouraged to contact Department staff for assistance in meeting the above requirements.

Church, service club, and cemetery signs



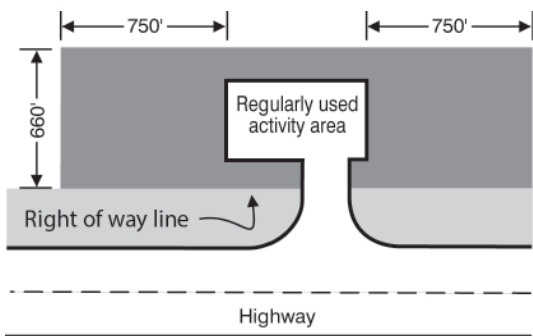
Signs which identify or direct to churches, nonprofit service club organizations, and cemeteries, may be erected provided the following criteria are met, as well as the general prohibitions listed on page 1:

1. The location placement must not be within the public right of way.

The regularly used portion is the portion that is open for business and staffed for at least 20 hours a week on property assessed as commercial or industrial. The hours of operation must be visibly posted on the premises.

4. **Size:** The display area of a single face sign is limited to a maximum of 1,200 square feet. For signs facing more than one direction, the display areas are limited to a maximum of 750 square feet per direction.

Figure 1
Unzoned commercial or industrial area



5. **Lights:** In general, flashing, intermittent, or moving lights are prohibited.
6. **Spacing:** In cities, a new sign must

Private directional signs



Private directional signs (located on private property along interstate, freeway primary, and primary highways) are intended to inform motorists of public and privately owned sites of natural phenomena, historic, cultural, scientific, educational, religious sites, and areas of natural scenic beauty or naturally suited for outdoor recreation that are nationally or regionally known.

Interstate highways

To qualify for a private directional sign visible from an interstate highway, an individual activity, area, or attraction must have an annual visitor count of **15,000** or more.

Freeway primary and primary highways

To qualify for a private directional sign visible from primary and freeway primary highways, an individual activity, area, or attraction must **meet one of the following conditions.**

- a. Have an annual visitor count of **10,000** or more.
- b. Be on the National Register of Historic Places **and** have an annual visitor count of 5,000 or more.

On-premise signs

On-premise signs advertise the principal product sold or activity conducted on the property where the sign is located, including the sale or lease of the property.

The general prohibitions (page 1), apply to on-premise signs.

1. **Permit:** Signs may require approval from the local authority but do not require approval from the Department. However, consulting with the Department is recommended if there are any questions as to whether a sign will be classified as an on-premise sign.
2. **Location:** Signs must be located on the same property as the advertised activity.

NOTE: Signs cannot be located on narrow strips of land that cannot be put to any reasonable use directly related to the advertised activity other than signing.

3. **Message:** Messages on signs are limited to advertising only those products sold or activities conducted at the sign site.

When a sign consists principally of brand name or trade name advertising and the product or service advertised is only incidental to the principal activity, or if it brings rental income to the property owner, it shall be considered outdoor advertising and not an on-premise sign.

attraction and facing the same direction of travel may be erected along any one interstate, freeway primary, or primary highway.

5. **Spacing:** Signs facing the same direction of travel shall be spaced a minimum of 1 mile apart.
6. **Message:** Messages on signs shall be limited to the identification of the activity, area, or attraction and directional information useful to the traveler in locating it. This may include mileage, route numbers, or exit numbers. The message shall also include current and sufficient information to inform the motorist of the hours, days, and months of operation.
7. **Lights:** In general, flashing, intermittent, or moving lights are prohibited.
8. **Special requirements:** In addition to the requirements already listed, the following must be provided with directional signing permit applications.
 - a. Proof of required visitor count and visitor addresses, as necessary.
 - b. Information concerning when the activity, area, or attraction is open to the public.
 - c. Written assurance the attraction, activity, or area complies with all applicable laws concerning public accommodations without regard to race, religion, color, sex, or national origin.