

one but when we get resistance we replace 'in kind.' After a knockdown, we try to make an immediate temporary fix so the resident can get mail and then do a permanent replacement in the spring. If we get one that was improperly positioned, we usually replace those but we strive to put it back right." He adds, "I shudder to think what we are going to do as granite mailbox posts and handmade unique (and expensive) boxes become more prevalent. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

Nashua does what most towns do: replace the broken mailbox with a standard mailbox and perform the labor themselves. In Bedford, they don't replace mailboxes at their cost if the post is old, or made of untreated lumber. If the post and box are placed in the proper location, then they will replace the mailbox. If, the mailbox appears to have been "faulty," then the mailbox is not replaced. This is done on a case by case situation.

Most towns use a standard mailbox, but what if an expensive mailbox is broken? Municipalities should create an ordinance before these questions come up is the best way to deal with this.

Suggestions

When mailboxes are hit, there are three major questions:

1. Who is at fault?
2. What type of mailbox to use in replacement?
3. And, liability.

To address these issues selectmen should create a mailbox ordinance. RSA 41:11 allows for a mailbox ordinance.

The ordinance should specify placement of the mailbox, the distance from the road surface and reference to the postal services specification for height. The municipal ordinance should not conflict with the postal services.

For people who want "fancy" mailboxes, but to keep the town from having to replace them, the ordinance might say: "All mailboxes shall conform to the following specifications (then describe the mailbox you wish to use). A mailbox may deviate from this specification, but if it is damaged by the town, residents replace it."

Local ordinances should also address potentially dangerous posts. For instance, a granite post might be considered more dangerous than a lumber post. The ordinance might say the post can be made of (specifying) materials and not of (specify materials).

The ordinance should say, "mailboxes will be replaced by the town, when the mailbox was hit by a plow, and as long as the mailbox was properly placed in accordance with the mailbox ordinance."

Conclusion

These methods should decrease the friction between residents and its highway department. Also, they might save the municipality from having to replace an expensive mailbox that was incorrectly placed.

Sources:

Excerpt from: A Hard Road To Travel, Bernie Waugh, Jr., New Hampshire Municipal Association, 1997, Pgs. 6, 19-20

A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways, AASHTO. May 1984

<http://www.usps.gov/feedback/faq-ccm.htm#mail>, January 30, 1998

Revision of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices; Final Rule

Effective January 9, 1997. Section 2D-39 of the MUTCD is modified to increase the recommended letter sizes for street name signs to a minimum of 6 inch uppercase letters, 1 ½ inch lower case letters, and 3 inch letters for street abbreviations. However, for local roads with speed limits 25 mph or less, the existing MUTCD language is modified to provide an option for continued use of minimum 4 inch uppercase letter size with 2 inch lowercase letters for street abbreviations. All street name signs are required to be retroreflective.

Since the recommended change from 4 to 6 inch letter size may impose some additional costs on State and local jurisdictions, the FHWA is establishing a compliance date for the installation of street name signs. The compliance date is 15 years after the issue date of this final rule (January 9, 1997) or as signs are replaced within the 15 year period. This will allow for replacement after a normal service life of the signs.

Source: Federal Register Online via GPO Access
[wais.access.gpo.gov]