

# New Sign Retroreflectivity Requirements

By Kathryn Myers, UNH T<sup>2</sup> Training Program Mgr. & Road Business Editor

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) specifies requirements on sign visibility. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has recently adopted new minimum requirements for sign retroreflectivity as mandated by Congress. The new provisions can be found in Section 2A.09 and Table 2A-3 of the MUTCD. Previously, the MUTCD did not specify requirements for sign retroreflectivity.

## Time-Frame

Municipalities have until **January 2012** to establish a sign assessment method designed to maintain minimum levels of sign retroreflectivity.

Municipalities have until **January 2015** to replace regulatory, warning, and ground-mounted guide (except street name) that do not meet the minimum levels of retroreflectivity.

## Methods

Municipalities have until **January 2018** to replace overhead guide signs and street name signs that do not meet the minimum levels of retroreflectivity.

The multiple year compliance period was chosen so municipalities are able to replace signs in a period that is consistent with the typical sign replacement cycle.

Municipalities do not have to measure the retroreflectivity of every sign. However, agencies must use one or more of the five assessment methods outlined in the MUTCD or develop other appropriate methods based on engineering studies. Any method must meet the requirements outlined in Table 2A-3.

Municipalities will be considered to be in compliance if they are following Section 2A.09, and even if some signs do not meet the

minimum retroreflectivity levels at some point in time.

## Sheeting Types

Sheeting types (as defined in ASTM 04956) that can be used according to the new requirements are as follows:

- All prismatic sheeting materials may be used for any sign.
- High Intensity Beaded (Type III) and Super Engineer Grade (Type II) may be used for any sign except for the white legend on overhead guide signs.
- Engineer Grade (Type I) may be used for all signs except for:
  1. the white legend on guide signs,
  2. the white legend on street name signs, and
  3. all yellow and orange warning signs.



Even though a particular type of sheeting might initially meet the minimum retroreflectivity levels when new, it could quickly degrade to below the minimum retroreflectivity levels.

For more information: [www.fhwa.dot.gov/retro](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/retro).

**\*UNHT<sup>2</sup> is hosting a Sign Retroreflectivity workshop on May 5, 2009 in Concord.**

### References

- Lupes, Matt (2008). *New Sign Retroreflectivity Requirements. Hawaiian Connections. Fall 2008, p.2.*
- New Sign Retroreflectivity Requirements: Maintaining Traffic Sign Retroreflectivity (2009). Report FHWA-SA-07-020. FHWA & USDOT.*