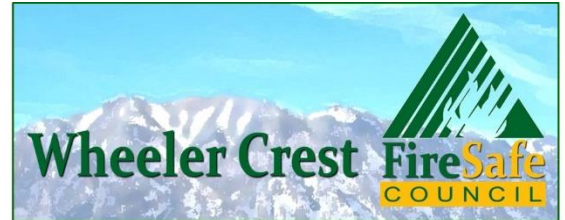


Fact Sheet #3

Address Markers and Street Signs



The Wheeler Crest Fire Safe Council (WCFSC) continues to work on several fronts to enhance fire safety, awareness, and prevention within our community. The Mono County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) both discuss the need for greatly improved marking of both street names and individual house numbers. When residential address signs are posted in a uniform and highly visible manner, first responders, including fire departments, ambulances, paramedics, and law enforcement, are better able to accurately and rapidly locate you and your home in the event of any emergency. Visible and unambiguous street signs are especially important for first responders who are not familiar with the Swall Meadows roadways.

Here, we provide a brief overview of the local and state regulations that govern both types of signage, as well as some recommended “best practices” that go above and beyond these legal requirements. These practices are especially important in fire-prone communities such as ours that are at the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

Address Markers

The relevant regulations concerning the nature and placement of house-number signs come from both Mono County¹ and CalFire². In the aggregate, they require that signs be reflective, have 4-inch-high numerals that contrast with the background color, and be placed at a height of at least 3 feet on a post of "durable" material. The sign needs to be placed at the intersection of the driveway and the street, and be visible in both directions (a great many of our current signs are not).

In addition, there are best-practice recommendations³ for a noncombustible post and a 5-foot minimum height, along with careful placement such that snow (especially snow-banks) or vegetation do not obscure them.

Because these signs need to be placed relatively near the street, they are usually in the so-called “clear zone”, an approximately one-lane-wide zone to the side of the roadway designed to minimize the severity of crashes involving vehicles running off the road. As such, all signposts in this zone need to be of a “breakaway” design, e.g., a light-duty fencepost driven into the ground without any reinforcing concrete.

- 1 Mono County General Plan, Land Development Regulations, Chapter 22, Section 120. <https://www.monocounty.ca.gov/generalplan/land-use-designation>
- 2 CalFire State Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations, sections 1274.08 to 1274.10. http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/downloads/Title_14.pdf



An approved reflective address marker with 4-inch numerals mounted on a fire-resistant post.

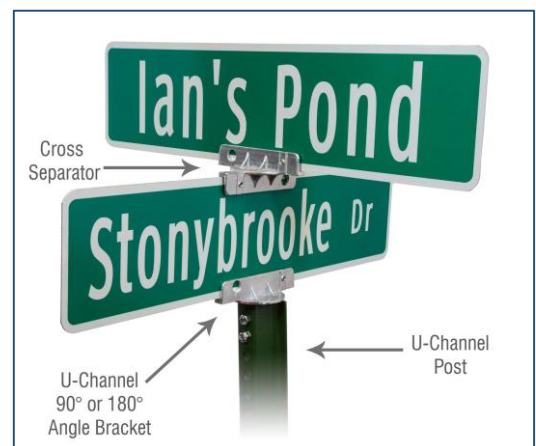
Street Signs

Requirements and guidance (suggestions) for street signs come from several sources. The Mono County General Plan¹ calls for reflective street signs with 4-inch lettering. The CalFire² standards are not very specific, but emphasize the importance of uniformity and consistency within a community, while the County CWPP³ emphasizes the importance of “large, reflective signage”.

Additional guidance comes from the International Code Council, which publishes a uniform set of standards that include a dedicated chapter on best practices for communities at the WUI.⁴ They too recommend 4-inch high reflective lettering, but also specify a noncombustible (metal) support post with the sign at a height of 7 feet.

In addition, California has a state-specific version of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)⁵ that is approved by the Federal Highway Administrator as a national standard. It calls for white lettering on a reflective green background, although a limited number of alternate colors are allowed (brown, blue, white). For residential areas (25 mph speed limit), the State standard seems to call for initial upper-case letters 4 inches in height, with 3-inch lower-case letters. However, other State documents suggest that 4-inch letters all in upper-case may be more appropriate.⁶

Because street signs must usually be placed in the clear zone, it is especially important that the signposts be of a breakaway design.⁷ Lighter-duty, U-channel metal posts (3 pounds per foot or less) are considered to be breakaway. Heavier-duty metal posts, whether constructed of U-channel, square, or tubular steel, require an approved breakaway device at ground level to maximize motorist safety.



Typical installation of reflective street signs at an intersection. Courtesy safetysigns.com.

3. 2009 Mono County CWPP, see pages 29-31, and Appendix D.
https://monocounty.ca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/5697/monocountycwpp.pdf
4. International Code Council, 2015 Standards, Chapter 4, Sec 403.4.
<https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/document/IWUIC2015/chapter-4-wildland-urban-interface-area-requirements>
5. The 2018 MUTCD standards can be found at
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/camutcd/camutcd2014rev3.html>
6. See <http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/tcd/docs/G7-1.pdf>
7. See pp. 12-16 in https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwas09025/