

**North Carolina Department of Transportation
Division of Highways
Transportation Mobility and Safety Division**

**STANDARD PRACTICE
for
General Service Signs**

The purpose of this standard practice is to provide guidance on this issue and specify the requirements for installation and removal of general service signs.

It will be the standard practice of NCDOT to install generic General Service signs or symbols that provide travelers with directional information for essential motorist services, in accordance with the MUTCD. Signs have white letters, symbols, arrows, and borders on a blue background for gas, diesel, alternative fuel (CNG, LP, ethanol, and biofuel), electric vehicle charging, food, lodging, tourist information, hospital, emergency medical center, and camping services with appropriate directional legend, and the exit number where applicable. Signs shall not contain the proper name or logo of any business.

The cost associated with General Motorist Services Signs is the responsibility of the Department of Transportation. When specific service (Logo) signs are made available, general motorist services signs for that service are not permitted. Signing for general motorist services shall be installed typically on rural freeways and expressways and shall be in conformance with the "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" and the following criteria. Rural freeways and expressways are located either in a rural unincorporated area or within the corporate limits of a city/town with a population of less than 40,000. Signing for Hospitals, tourist information centers, and camping may be installed in urban areas. Requests for signing for general motorist services shall be directed to the highway division engineer having jurisdiction in the county in which the sign is proposed. If approved, services signing shall be installed and maintained by the Department of Transportation.

Criteria:

- A. The following general requirements shall be applied in determining the placement of service signs:
 1. Service signs shall not be erected at locations within or near municipalities where it is obvious to the motorist that services are available. A facility shall meet the specific requirements for signs in Paragraph (B).
 2. The maximum distance that a service, excluding camping, can be located from the facility shall not exceed three miles in either direction via an all-weather road in rural areas and one mile in urban areas. The maximum distance for a camping service shall not exceed 15 miles in rural areas and five miles in urban areas.
 3. Said distances shall be measured from the point on the interchange crossroad, coincident with the centerline of the facility route median, along the roadways to the respective motorist service. The point to be measured to for each business is a point on the roadway that is perpendicular to the corner of the nearest wall of the business to the interchange. The wall to be measured to shall be that of the main building or

- office. Walls of sheds (concession stands, storage buildings, separate restrooms, etc.) whether or not attached to the main building are not to be used for the purposes of measuring. If the office (main building) of a business is located more than 0.2 mile from a public road on a private road or drive, the distance to the office along the said drive/road shall be included in the overall distance measured to determine whether or not the business qualifies for service signing. The office shall be presumed to be at the place where the service is provided.
4. A business sign on the building shall include the months closed, if operated on a seasonal basis.
- B. Specific Requirements for Erection of General Motorist Service Signs or Symbols:
1. Gas, Diesel, and alternative fuel sources if all of the following are available:
 - a. appropriate licensing to operate as required by law;
 - b. vehicle services for fuel, motor oil, tire repair and water;
 - c. restroom facilities and drinking water suitable for public use;
 - d. an on-premise attendant to collect monies, make change, and make or arrange for vehicle services; and
 - e. year-round operation at least 16 continuous hours per day, 7 days a week.
 - f. Exception for signing to unmanned stations, providing scarce source alternative fuels (EV, CNG, and LP) if all of the following are available:
 - i. Canopy
 - ii. Well lighted area
 - iii. On-premise signing that clearly shows the facility is open to public
 - iv. Emergency call box
 2. Food if all of the following are available:
 - a. appropriate licensing to operate as required by law, and a permit to operate by the health department;
 - b. year-round operation at least 12 continuous hours per day, serving meals prepared on-premise during hours of operation , 7 days a week;
 - c. indoor seating for at least 20 persons; and
 - d. public restroom facilities.
 3. Lodging if all of the following are available:
 - a. appropriate licensing to operate as required by law, and a permit to operate by the health department;
 - b. sleeping accommodations consisting of a minimum of 10 units, each including bathroom and sleeping rooms except a lodging business operating as a "Bed and Breakfast" establishment with fewer than 10 units may request "Bed and Breakfast" signs;
 - c. off-street vehicle parking for each lodging room for rent; and
 - d. year-round continuous operation.
 4. Camping if all of the following are available:
 - a. appropriate licensing to operate as required by law;
 - b. meeting all state and county health and sanitation codes, and having water and sewer systems which have been duly inspected and approved by the local health authority. The operator shall present evidence of such inspection and approval;
 - c. at least 10 campsites with accommodations for all types of travel-trailers, tents and camping vehicles;

- d. parking accommodations to meet current demand;
 - e. continuous operation, 7 days a week during business season.
5. Hospital if continuous emergency care capability, with a physician on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, is available. Hospital signs shall consist of the word "Hospital" or "H" along the main highway and at the end of the ramp. The blue "H" shall be used to trailblaze from the ramp terminal to the hospital where needed. The intent of providing "Hospital" signs along interstate or controlled access highways is to direct unfamiliar motorists to a hospital in case there is a need for emergency medical services. Hospital signs shall be used only for hospitals equipped to handle emergency cases with overnight beds for inpatient procedures/surgeries.
 6. Emergency medical centers if continuous emergency care capability, with an emergency care nurse on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and a physician on call is available. Emergency medical care signs may be used to trailblaze from the closest primary route to the emergency medical care center.
 7. Tourist Information Center if all of the following are available:
 - a. The motorist using the highway in a particular direction must be able to leave and return to the highway via the same interchange and continue in the same direction of travel.
 - b. The service must be located in a rest area on the freeway or within one mile of the interchange off ramp and on a direct route from the freeway.
 - c. The service must operate continuously for at least eight hours per day, seven days per week, and 360 days per year.
 - d. At least one separate and trained attendant with knowledge of tourist facilities in the state shall be on duty to service visitors during all hours of operation.
 - e. The facility must have available at no charge to visitors complete information on tourist facilities in the state; such as lodging, auto service, food, medical, recreational, historical and scenic sites; and it must also be readily available when attendant is off duty.
 - f. The service must be housed in a separated area from other facilities in an appropriate building to provide an area, heated in winter and cooled in summer, of not less than 625 square feet of floor area for displays and lounge devoted for providing this service.
 - g. The service must have at least one 50 pocket rack for noncommercial public service materials and displays.
 - h. The service must have rest room facilities available at no cost to the visitor and designed for use by handicapped individuals.
 - i. The service must have drinking water approved by appropriate local authority.
 - j. The service must have a public telephone designed for use by handicapped individuals.
 - k. The service must have off-street parking at no cost to the motorist and must have curb cuts and ramps for the handicapped.
 - l. Any displays, literature, magazines, etc., that would be judged by the Department to be offensive to visitors with children must not be readily visible.
 - m. The service must provide designated facilities for pets.
 - n. The name of the operating agency, community, group or enterprise shall not appear in the legend of any sign.

8. Visitor Center signs may be permitted at locations not within a rest area, provided all criteria for Tourist Information are met, with the exceptions that the facility is not required to provide designated areas for pets and the visitor information available may be for the area rather than the entire state.
- C. Removal of General Motorist Service Signs.
1. If municipal limits are revised so that an interchange is totally within a municipality, then existing general motorist services signs may be retained in place so long as they are in a serviceable appearance and are not in need of refurbishing maintenance. When the signs are no longer serviceable they shall be removed.
 2. When specific services (Logo) signing is made available along a section of controlled access roadway, then the existing general motorist services signing for that service shall be removed on that section of roadway.