



## Temporary Traffic Signs for Special Events



### SUMMARY

Temporary traffic signs may be erected for a limited period to guide traffic going to special events, such as major sporting events, shows or other public gatherings that are expected to attract large volumes of traffic. This leaflet gives advice on the circumstances in which these signs may be used, their design, construction and mounting.

The advice in this leaflet supersedes that in the Department of Transport Network Management Advisory Leaflet, "PROVISION OF TEMPORARY TRAFFIC SIGNS TO SPECIAL EVENTS", dated May 1993, which is hereby withdrawn.

### INTRODUCTION

Temporary traffic signs to special events can be provided to assist road safety and reduce congestion by giving clear directions to road users seeking the best route to an event.

Regulation 53 of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002<sup>1</sup> (TSRGD) provides for temporary signs to be erected to guide traffic to sporting events, exhibitions or other public gatherings which are expected to attract a considerable volume of traffic.

Fixed signs must be one of the following: black on white; black on yellow; white on blue or blue on white. Under direction 38 of TSRGD<sup>1</sup> they may only be displayed for the duration of the event, and not longer than 6 months without the approval of the Secretary of State.

They are usually erected by road user organisations with the consent of the traffic authority. For safety reasons, it is seldom appropriate for private individuals to erect signs on public roads.

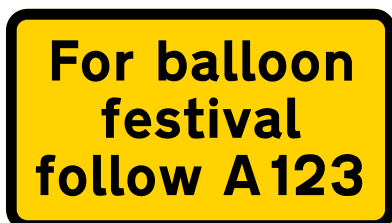
Whilst this leaflet contains advice on the design and use of fixed signs, regulation 53 of TSRGD<sup>1</sup> also permits the use of light-emitting variable message signs (VMS) for this purpose.

The restrictions and requirements relating to sign content and erection that apply to fixed signs must be applied to VMS. In particular, the guidance in respect of letter sizes is of great importance; the height of upper case letters is 1.4 times the recommended x-height.

On motorway and all-purpose trunk roads in England, reference should be made to the Highways Agency's policy document<sup>2</sup> for additional requirements and guidance.

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE ERECTION OF TEMPORARY SIGNS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Temporary signs should be provided only for events expected to attract a considerable volume of traffic from outside the local area and where there is adequate parking. They should not be used on routes where there are already permanent local direction or tourist signs to the site, although for some major events it might be desirable to indicate other routes to assist traffic management. Where the route to a special event differs from the signed route to a location, temporary signs of the type shown below might be helpful. Signs should not normally be erected more than 48 hours before an event and should not be retained after it has ended.



The signs must comply with the provisions of TSRGD<sup>1</sup> (currently regulation 53 of the 2002 Regulations) and must give clear information about the route to be followed. Under no circumstances should telephone numbers, internet addresses or other contact details be displayed on temporary traffic signs for special events.

Names of event sponsors should not be included unless similar events in the same area at the same time make such identification necessary for traffic management purposes. Dates and times should not normally be included since the signs are not intended to advertise an event, but are for people who know about it and need guidance to the site. Such information may however be included if the traffic authority considers it would be helpful to other road users to have advance information about likely congestion. If included, the text should conform to the requirements of TSRGD<sup>1</sup> as set out in Chapter 7 of the Traffic Signs Manual<sup>3</sup>. The number of words on a sign should **always** be kept to the absolute minimum - the longer the message, the longer drivers take to read it, and the longer their attention is diverted from the road.

Signing proposals should be put to the appropriate traffic authority in time for them to be given proper consideration and for the police to be consulted where necessary. This should normally be a minimum of 4 weeks before the event. Proposals should include information about the nature of the event, the expected number of visitors and the provisions for parking.

The distance from which signs should be provided and the number of routes to be indicated depends on the nature of the event and the volume of traffic anticipated, but once signing has commenced, continuity must be provided along the route. Signing for up to 5 miles or from the nearest A or B road should usually be adequate. More extensive signing might be appropriate for events which are expected to attract very large numbers of visitors (e.g. major air shows) but it is very rarely appropriate for events to be signed from motorways.

The traffic authority is the final arbiter of the signing appropriate for any event and may remove or re-site any signs which have not

been approved, at the expense of the body which erected them.

Traffic authorities are encouraged to develop their own policies for the provision of temporary signing for special events, having due regard for local conditions. While adherence to the requirements of TSRGD<sup>1</sup> is mandatory, local policies should address matters such as attendance numbers and extent of signing.

Organisations erecting temporary traffic signs on the highway must take all necessary measures to avoid obstructing traffic and also to ensure they do not cause additional danger to the public or others working on the highway, as specified in Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual<sup>4</sup> and the Code of Practice “Safety at Street Works and Road Works”<sup>5</sup>. They are responsible for the cost of making good any damage to street furniture and statutory undertakers’ equipment resulting from the erection of the signs and must have adequate public liability insurance cover. They will be required to indemnify the traffic authority against any claim arising out of an accident alleged to have been caused by the inadequacy of a temporary sign whether in siting, visibility, insecure mounting or other cause.

## DESIGN OF SIGNS

In order to ensure adequate legibility, it is essential that temporary traffic signs are designed to the same standards as permanent signs. A badly designed sign constitutes a hazard because a driver’s attention might be diverted from the driving task for an unnecessarily long time. The design rules contained in Chapter 7 of the Traffic Signs Manual<sup>3</sup> should therefore be observed. These include the size, positioning and orientation of arrows relative to the size and content of text.

The colours and design of temporary signs are prescribed in TSRGD<sup>1</sup> (currently regulation 53 of the 2002 Regulations). The signs must be either rectangular or rectangular with a pointed end. Table 1 sets out the combinations of colours and alphabets that are currently permitted for signs to special events. Black on yellow should be used on motorways.

Letter Colour	Background Colour	Alphabet
Black	Yellow	Transport Heavy
Black	White	Transport Heavy
Blue	White	Transport Heavy
White	Blue	Transport Medium

Table 1: Permitted design of signs.

The colours should be as specified in BS EN 12899-1:2007<sup>6</sup> and in accordance with the recommendations of the National Annex thereto. Fluorescent materials are not permitted. The back of signs must be grey, black or in a non-reflective metallic finish.

The signs may include wording, numerals, arrows or chevrons and any appropriate symbol taken from any diagram in any Schedule to TSRGD<sup>1</sup>. The Transport alphabets prescribed in TSRGD<sup>1</sup> (Schedule 13) for traffic signs, which use upper and lower case lettering, should be used as these are designed for optimum legibility.

They may also accommodate any crest, badge or other emblem of a traffic authority, police authority or an organisation representative of road users. However, the inclusion of such devices, which must be incorporated into the sign face in accordance with the design rules set out in Chapter 7 of the Traffic Signs Manual<sup>3</sup>, will inevitably lead to larger signs. As an alternative, direction 42 of TSRGD<sup>1</sup> permits information about the ownership of a sign to be indicated on the back of a sign in characters not exceeding 25 millimetres in height where they are shown in a contrasting colour, or in characters not exceeding 50 millimetres in height where they are embossed in the same colour.

The size of a sign will be dictated by the size of lettering required to enable the legend to be read from vehicles travelling at the prevailing traffic speed. Letter size is usually expressed in terms of “x-height”, defined as the height of the lower case letter “x” in millimetres. The layout and/or lettering must not be compressed or otherwise distorted as this will adversely affect legibility. All text on a sign must have the same x-height.

Signs placed in advance of a road junction or entrance to an event venue (known as advance direction signs or ADSs) shall be rectangular signs comprising text describing the destination and a horizontal or angled arrow indicating the direction to be taken at the junction or entrance. Exceptionally, an ADS may incorporate the U-turn symbol shown in diagram 2111.1 in the TSRGD<sup>1</sup>.



*Example of an advance direction sign (ADS).*

Direction signs (or DSs) shall be placed to indicate the point at which drivers should turn into a road or entrance. DSs consist of a rectangular sign with a pointed end and are commonly known as flag-type signs. They are generally placed opposite the turning, but may be placed in the entrance itself, facing traffic. They must **never** be placed in advance of the turning.



*Example of a direction sign (DS).*

ADSs are required to be read at normal traffic speeds. The x-height will depend on those speeds and also on the amount of information on the sign. The x-height on a DS can generally be lower because it is assumed that drivers will have reduced their speed to some extent in anticipation of making a turning manoeuvre. However, if no advance direction sign is provided, the x-height on a direction sign should not be reduced.

Recommended x-heights for ADSs and DSs are given in Table 2.

## POSITIONING OF SIGNS

Temporary signing must not obstruct sightlines at side roads or roundabouts, nor obscure a road user's view of other signs and signals. Care should be taken to avoid adding to already complex sign assemblies as only a limited amount of information can be read from moving vehicles. Advance direction signs must be sufficiently far from a junction for road users to read and react to the message. Signs should be placed where they are not obscured by foliage, street furniture or other signs. Appropriate siting and visibility distances are given in Table 2.

Road users are accustomed to signs being on the left hand side and such positioning should be the general practice. However, siting on the right will sometimes be dictated by road geometry, e.g. where a clear view of the sign cannot be obtained on the left. Direction signs, which are placed either opposite or in an entrance or turning, will be on the right for traffic approaching in one direction.

The edge of a sign nearest to the carriageway should be at least 450mm from the edge of the carriageway, and at least 600mm where there is a severe crossfall. On high speed dual carriageway roads the clearance should be at least 1200mm, and where there is a hardened verge the nearest edge of the sign should be not less than 600mm behind the edge of the hardening.

Where signs are mounted above or project over footways or areas readily accessible to pedestrians, the lower edge of the sign must not be less than 2100mm from the ground. This should be increased to 2300mm over cycle tracks or shared-use facilities. Where a sign is mounted above a verge, the mounting height should be between 900mm and 1500mm above the highest point of the adjacent carriageway, but special care must be taken not to obstruct sightlines e.g. for vehicles emerging from side roads. The safety of horse riders using the verge should also be considered.

To prevent specular reflection, which can dazzle drivers, signs should be angled to face slightly away from the beam direction of headlights from approaching vehicles within 200m of the sign. This is equally important whether or not the sign in question is itself required to be read at night. An included angle of 95 degrees between the

plane of the sign and the direction of travel will generally be adequate.

## MOUNTING OF SIGNS

As most temporary signs are required for only a few days, they will usually be mounted on existing posts. Care should be taken to ensure that this does not result in a mounting height lower than that recommended. Most lighting columns are not designed to carry signs and temporary signs should not be attached to columns without the express permission of the traffic authority.

Temporary signs should never be fixed to posts which already support any of the following signs:

- STOP
- GIVE WAY
- "no entry"
- speed limit (other than repeater signs)
- traffic signals

Using posts which carry regulatory signs or triangular warning signs should be avoided where there is risk of confusing drivers or distracting their attention. Temporary signs that include dates and/or times should not be co-located with existing traffic signs.

Temporary signs must not obscure any part of another sign fixed to the same post. The overall appearance must be tidy and professional in appearance. The fixings must attach the sign securely to its support and must not damage the protective coating of any posts. They should be adequate to prevent rotation or slippage. Where a special post has to be provided, it should not project above the top of the sign.

Care must be taken when using temporary supports to ensure that they are adequate to resist traffic and wind buffeting.

## CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS

The signs should be of robust construction, but the materials used need not be as durable as those used for permanent signs. Sign faces should be reflectorised when they are required to be read during the hours of darkness, in which case they should comply with the National Annex to BS EN 12899-1:2007<sup>4</sup>.

The practice of re-using temporary signs can lead to damage or residue build-up which can, with time, affect legibility. Care should be taken to ensure that this does not happen to an excessive degree.

Where posts are specially provided they must not be rusty or otherwise unsightly and must remain serviceable for the expected life of the sign. When erecting them, care must be taken to avoid damage to statutory undertakers' equipment and the ground surface must be reinstated to its former condition when the temporary sign is removed.

## REFERENCES

1. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002.  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/3113/made>
2. Highways Agency Variable Signs and Signals (VSS) Policy: Special Events.  
<http://www.highways.gov.uk/knowledge/334.aspx>
3. Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 7 - The Design of Traffic Signs. 2003.  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/traffic-signs-manual>
4. Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 8 - Traffic Safety Measures and Signs for Road Works and Temporary Situations. 2009.  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/traffic-signs-manual>
5. Code of Practice "Safety at Street Works and Road Works". 2001.  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/street-works-safety>
6. BS EN 12899-1:2007 Fixed, vertical road traffic signs. <http://shop.bsigroup.com/>

NOTE: It is important to ensure that these documents have not been superseded.

The DfT sponsors a wide range of research into traffic management issues. The results published in Traffic Advisory Leaflets (TAL) are applicable to England, Wales and Scotland. Attention is drawn to variations in statutory provisions or administrative practices between the countries. Within England, enquiries should be made to: Traffic Division, Department for Transport, 3/26 Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR. Telephone 020 7944 2594. E-mail: [TAL@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:TAL@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

To join the TAL mailing list, send an e-mail with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to [TAL@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:TAL@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

**Table 2: TEMPORARY TRAFFIC SIGNS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS - LETTER SIZES AND SITING DISTANCES**

		Advance Direction Signs			Direction Signs (see note 1)	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
85%ile approach speed of private cars	Examples of typical roads	x-height (see note 2)  mm	Distance of sign from junction (see note 3)  m	Min. clear visibility distance of sign  m	x-height (see note 2)  mm	Min. clear visibility distance of sign  m
Up to 20mph	Very narrow	Not normally needed			60 (50)	30
21 to 30mph	Urban and rural roads of local character	100 (75)	45-60	60	75 (60)	45
31 to 40mph	Urban dual carriageway and rural single two-lane roads	125 (100)	50-90	75	100 (75)	60
41 to 50mph	High standard rural single carriageway roads	150 (125)	70-150	105	125 (100)	75
51 to 60mph	Dual carriageway and wide single carriageway roads	200 (150)	100-225	135	150 (125)	105
61 to 70mph	High speed all-purpose dual carriageway roads	250 (200)	225-325	180	200 (150)	135
70mph	Motorways (see note 4)	300 (250)				

**NOTES**

- Where there is no advance direction sign, letter size and siting for direction signs should be in accordance with columns 3 and 5.
- Temporary signs are frequently co-located with existing signs. Where this occurs, the temporary sign should have the same x-height as the main sign, or that shown in columns 3 and 6 of the Table, whichever is larger. Where free-standing temporary signs are provided, either in the absence of permanent signs or separated from them by at least the lower distance shown in column 4, the alternative x-height shown in brackets may be used. Signs containing more than 4 words should always use the unbracketed x-height.
- Temporary advance direction signs should generally be placed at the distance from the junction shown in column 4. Where there are permanent signs at a junction, it might be appropriate to mount the temporary signs at the same location. Otherwise, temporary signs to special events should be separated from other signs by at least the lower distance in column 4. Special siting considerations apply at motorways and high-speed all-purpose dual carriageway roads. The traffic authority will determine the appropriate sign locations.
- Consent is very rarely given to the provision of temporary signing on motorways. Where it is permitted as an exceptional traffic management measure for a major event, erection of signs should be as specified by the traffic authority. Temporary signs with an x-height greater than 250mm require authorisation.