

Signs & Signals



National Public Works Week 2016—Always There

May 17, 2016

Signs & Signals Facts

24/7	staff on standby
15,000	signs maintained (approx.)
8,000	hours to get beginner Electrical Journeyman License
150	intersections maintained
5	signals crew
2	signs crew
1	supervisor

An inside look at traffic signals & every sign you can imagine



SIGNS

Walking into the Sign Shop at the Department of Public Works is pretty exciting, if you like to see

how things work. The first, design area, is full of blank signs, their reflective surfaces glittering as you move past. There's a computer for laying out a sign, and two printers of different sizes to create the components.

This crew maintains just about every sign in the city: street, yield and stop, pedestrian crossings, parking, and special signs. We purchase some signs for efficiency's sake, but our crew can make just about anything.

We have a thick book of federal laws, plus the Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, which serve as references when we're creating new signs. The crew uses specific software to measure, layout and plotter/print new



signs that they then install.

Standards change often and we replace signs on a

12-year cycle. Right now we're in the middle of a federally-mandated project

that updates the size and reflectivity of street signs, so you may see us on your street in the coming few years as we complete this work.

Many of our old signs are recycled with a local metal recycler.

We always have a maintenance schedule in place, but if a stop sign is hit and knocked over, we drop that work to fix the immediate need.



SIGNALS

We operate an 8-year-old traffic control center that's unique for the size of our city. The 56 cameras help us keep an eye on traffic patterns at key intersections around the

city.

These cameras feed us live information and do not record. They help with signal operations and, if there's a traffic accident, we can see if traffic should be rerouted or if we're needed to fix signal equipment.

The crew tries to visit every traffic signal and cabinet once per year. We clean the signal heads and, when needed, clear snow because the LED lights don't heat enough to melt it.

Our sign (and signal) technicians

work for and earn certifications from the International Municipal Signal Association.

Mechanical aptitude is helpful in this field, as well as the ability to put all of our tools together to complete this work, since most people don't begin this work knowing the manual on traffic control devices.

On the signals side, our technicians need a state electrical license, which has various levels.

As with other Public Works jobs, much of this work is learned by doing, as well as by taking classes from the traffic signal suppliers we use.

Always There

- ◆ Keeping traffic and pedestrians safe by always taking care of stop signs, street signs, traffic signals and more.
- ◆ Emergency calls with a two-hour window in the middle of the night to fix a sign or signal.
- ◆ Maintaining visibility of signs so drivers can both see and read them.



Signal Supervisor Brad Hoffman in the Traffic Center.