

Town of Rhinebeck Highway Department

Newsletter

Kathy Kinsella, Superintendent

Fall 2008

Bob Wyant, Foreman

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer 2008 went by quickly at the Highway Department. It is a busy time for us, as much of our work is weather dependent and we try to pack a lot in between May and September.

This year's schedule has been especially challenging, as we have worked around an exceptionally rainy season and drastically rising material costs.

Just as we have all felt the pain of rising prices at the fuel pumps, as a department operating a budget, price increases have impacted our projects, as well.

In spite of these challenges, the department has stayed on track, and we are moving forward with our planned projects.

This is also the time of year when we begin our transition to winter operations. It will not be long before we start fitting our trucks with their designated spreaders and start readying our plows.

Before we get to that though, let us enjoy Rhinebeck's beautiful autumn colors. Have a happy and safe season.

Kathy Kinsella



SCHOOL IS BACK

Please remember to use extra caution in school zones and near school bus stops. New York State law requires that drivers stop for buses when their red lights are flashing or the stop arm is extended. Be alert for children darting into the road.



STATE CONTRACTS

Did you know that all of the contracts that New York State enters into are available on-line for public review? The site has searchable databases of more than 60,000 contracts and spending for more than 100 state agencies, with updates entered daily. These contracts include those that town municipalities use to purchase materials and equipment. For more information, please visit the NYS Comptroller's web site at:
<http://osc.state.ny.us/vendrep/searchnyscontracts.htm>

CONTACT US

Please do not hesitate to let us know if there is any condition that needs our attention or if you have any questions about the work we are doing. Our phone number is 845-876-6263 and our e-mail address is rhinebeckroads@hvc.rr.com

Back issues of the Highway Department newsletter are available on request.
Please call 845-876-6263 or e-mail rhinebeckroads@hvc.rr.com

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SIGNS AND OTHER TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

A frequent request that we receive at the Highway Department is for signage. Although it may seem simple to place a warning sign that says "SLOW" or "CHILDREN AT PLAY", there are several issues that deserve consideration.

Installing signage on our roadways can be controversial. One resident may express a desire for signage, while the next door neighbors may feel it adds a visual obstruction and is unnecessary. So it really must come down to a sign's appropriateness and effectiveness at a specific location.

In September of 2007, New York State adopted the Federal Highway Administration's "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" as the governing standards for signs and all other traffic control devices throughout the State. This large, textbook-style document, combined with supplements, provides standards and guidelines for all traffic control signage that can be placed on public roads.

When considering signage, it must first be determined what specific signs are allowed under certain conditions. Warning signs are meant to inform drivers of a hazard in time to react safely. These types of signs should be used in situations where a driver would not expect to encounter the condition being forewarned. An example of this is a "Children at Play" sign. I quote Cornell University's Local Roads Program:

"Everyone agrees that there is a need to protect children. However, there is no evidence that Children at Play signs fulfill that need. Extensive studies have shown that they neither reduce vehicle speeds, nor reduce crashes with children. They may actually hurt by misleading parents into thinking drivers are more alert."

The general rule is to use Children at Play signs only in an area where a driver would not expect the presence of children, such as an industrial area. According to MUTCD (Federal) guidelines:

"The sign should be used only in locations where motorists would not expect children playing in the vicinity of the roadway. The sign is not intended for general use in residential areas or other locations where obvious residential development alerts motorists to the possibility of children at play. The use of this sign is discouraged. It may give a false sense of security to parents of children that play near the road. It does not clearly inform drivers of what action they should take."

Warning signs should be used only where needed. Overuse of warning signs tends to reduce their impact and therefore their effectiveness.

It is also important that traffic controls are uniform so that drivers from anywhere can understand the intent of the control. For example, double yellow lines have a clear meaning that traffic should not cross into the oncoming lane. If those lines were red in one community and blue in another, motorists would not know how to interpret the meaning of the lines.

Signs and traffic control devices should identify a condition, command attention, give a clear, direct message and allow for driver response. If a traffic control device does not meet those basic considerations it may be overlooked, ignored, misunderstood or confusing.

Anyone interested in learning more about traffic control devices and guidelines can access the "Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices" on NYS DOT's website at:

<https://www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/divisions/operating/oom/transportation-systems/traffic-operations-section/mutcd>