

CLEARWATER COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT SIGNING POLICY

“SLOW, CHILDREN AT PLAY” SIGNS “WATCH FOR CHILDREN” SIGNS

The Clearwater County Highway Department will not utilize these signs, because it is not recognized by the State of Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), the legal sign manual in the State. The reasons why these signs are not accepted by the MUTCD are:

1. These signs are unenforceable. Local police cannot write tickets based solely on these signs, unless motorists are exceeding the posted speed limit.
2. Motorists should be aware that children may be playing on all highways. To sign specific highways would imply that those highways without signs have no children nearby. If one highway is signed, all highways should be signed, which is impractical.
3. These signs give parents and children a false sense of security.
4. There is not data to support that these signs effectively modify driver behavior.

Reference: attached information from Institute of Transportation Engineers white paper

Dan Sauvé, County Engineer

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A variety of signs exist to try and warn of the presence of children, “Watch for Children,” “Slow, Children at Play,” etc. The request for these signs generally stem from parents’ concern for their children’s safety in the streets near their home. Unfortunately, the request for this type of signage is based on a widespread but false belief that traffic signs provide protection.

Effects

Volumes. No effect.

Speed. Little or no effect.

Traffic Noise, Air Quality and Energy Consumption. Little or no effect.

Traffic Safety. Little or no effect.

Cost

Minimal for one installation. May become significant if installed at a large number of locations.

Additional Considerations

There is no indication that signs of this type achieve the desired safety benefits. Since children live in virtually every neighborhood, signs would have to be posted in all blocks, or drivers might assume that no children live where the signs are not posted.

Signs of this type might indicate that the street is an acceptable place to play.

There is no evidence or documentation that this type of signing has any legal consequence.

From: Institute of Transportation
Engineers