



The Voice of  
County Road Officials

Member Login

[Home](#) [Membership](#) [Events](#) [News](#) [Programs](#) [Resources](#)



August 2017

### Who's Responsible for Railroad Crossing Signs?

By Laura Slusher, PE  
Project Manager, Indiana LTAP's HELPERS

In Indiana, you may have recently noticed the installation of two Stop signs, two Yield signs, or a Stop and a Yield sign at unprotected railroad crossings. What's up with these double, and sometimes conflicting, signs?

What you're witnessing is a change in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which now requires the upgrade of existing devices in order to provide a uniform warning level at all crossings. This improvement aims to maintain or increase safety performance at highway at-grade railroad crossings, thereby reducing potential crash risk.



*Conflicting signs at railroad crossings confuse motorists.*

#### News

- [NACE Comments on Project Streamlining](#)
- [INFRA Grants for Rural Projects](#)
- [NACE Active on NACo Transportation Committee](#)
- [FHWA Creating LRSPs for 7 Counties](#)
- [David Brand Recipient of Safety Award](#)
- [Todd Kinney New South Central VP](#)
- [Paul Gruner - Urban County Engineer](#)
- [Richard West - Rural County Engineer](#)
- [Michigan Partnering Agreement Signed](#)
- [NACE 2017 Presentations](#)
- [NACE 2017 Pictures](#)

#### Quick Links

- [My Profile](#)
- [Become a Corporate Partner](#)
- [Join Today](#)
- [Roadway Safety Resources](#)
- [About NACE](#)
- [Like Us on Facebook](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

#### Our Sponsors

The 2009 MUTCD published a new rule that changed the definition of a Crossbuck. A Crossbuck alone has always meant Yield and the new rule reinforces that concept to increase driver understanding. Per the current MUTCD, a Crossbuck is defined as an assembly consisting of a sign post, Crossbuck, a Yield or Stop Sign, and retroreflective striping on the front and back of the sign post. Figure 8B-2 in the Indiana MUTCD shows the required Crossbuck assembly. Since the Railroad Company is required by Indiana Code to install the Crossbuck (IC 8-6-6-1), the responsibility for implementing these new requirements belongs to them. The MUTCD established a target compliance date of December 31, 2019, to complete these changes.

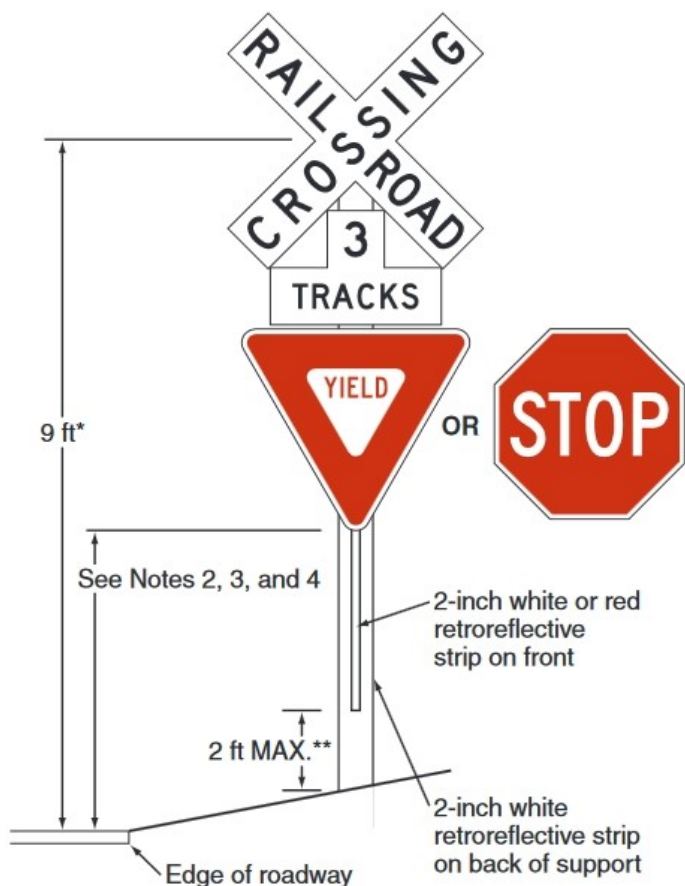


Figure 8B-2 (IN MUTCD) shows the current sign requirements at an unprotected highway-railroad crossing.

Railroad Companies are gradually upgrading all of their signs to meet the 2019 compliance date. In doing so, there may temporarily be double, and possibly conflicting, signs at a crossing. Local Street or Highway departments must, as soon as possible, remove any conflicting or extra signs once the Railroad Company has installed the new Crossbuck assembly with a Yield or Stop sign.

All the signs at the crossing are within the railroad right-of-way, so are the responsibility of the Railroad Company. All signs and pavement markings on the roadway approach to the crossing are the responsibility of the road owner. A local agency is allowed to place either a Yield or Stop sign on a separate post if desired, as long as the Yield or Stop sign is removed from the Crossbuck assembly post at the same time. Figure 8B-3 in the Indiana MUTCD shows the requirements for installing the Yield or Stop on a separate post.

The Yield sign is always the default sign for unprotected crossings. The Stop sign can only be used if an engineering study shows it is warranted. A Stop sign changes the meaning of the Crossbuck sign - with a Stop sign, all approaching vehicles must come to a complete stop even if no train is approaching or occupying the crossing. A Stop sign might be warranted based on conditions such as poor sight distance, approach roadway grades, and speed of the trains. For any crossings where the local Street or Highway Department would like a Stop sign installed, or previously had a warranted Stop sign installed, they should



work with the owner of that rail line to change the Yield sign to a Stop sign on the Crossbuck assembly. The road owner is responsible for providing the engineering study that is necessary to install a Stop sign.

You may be wondering why the Crossbuck assembly now requires retroreflective strips on the sign posts at unprotected crossings. This addition was made to help drivers recognize when a dark train, which may not be otherwise visible from a few hundred feet away, is passing the crossing at night. The driver of the approaching vehicle can see flickering from the retroreflective strips at the gaps between the rail cars at a distance and make the decision to stop in enough time to avoid the train.

Part 8 of the Indiana MUTCD provides more information on traffic control of railroad crossings.

If a local agency has questions about railroad jurisdiction and crossings, assistance is available from the INDOT Rail Programs Office. Contact Tom Rueschhoff at [trueschhoff@indot.in.gov](mailto:trueschhoff@indot.in.gov) or (317) 233-2065.

Special thanks to Kevin Knoke of the INDOT Office of Traffic Safety for his assistance in writing this article.

*Reprinted from the Indiana LTAP Newsletter, Summer 2017.*