

Chapter 5

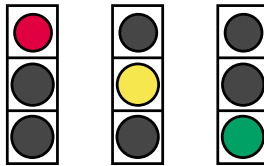
Signals, Signs and Pavement Markings

Traffic signals, signs and pavement markings are used for traffic control to provide a smooth, orderly flow of traffic. It is important to understand their meanings.

Traffic Signals

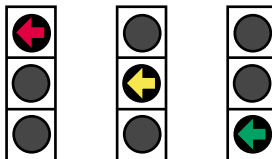
The traffic signal is used to control traffic and pedestrians at some intersections and mid-block crosswalks.

- A circular green signal means “go,” but left turning traffic is “unprotected” and must yield the right of way to oncoming traffic.
- A circular yellow signal means “caution” and indicates that the signal is about to turn red. Stop for a yellow signal unless you are too close to the intersection to stop safely — in that case, drive cautiously through the intersection. Never speed up for a yellow signal to “beat” the red signal.
- A steady red circular signal means “STOP.” Unless there is a sign indicating “NO TURN ON RED,” a right turn can be made after coming to a complete stop. All vehicles turning right shall yield the right of way to other traffic and pedestrians using the intersection and to pedestrians in reasonably close proximity to the intersection and who are starting to cross in front of the traffic that is required to stop at the red light. Failure to yield to a pedestrian under these circumstances will result in a penalty of not more than \$500 and not less than \$100.



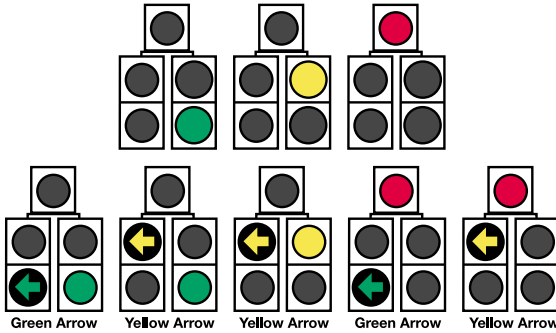
Arrow signals are also important traffic signals.

- A green arrow means that you have a “protected” turning movement with no other conflicting traffic in the intersection except U-turn traffic that should yield to all other traffic entering the intersection.
- A red arrow means turning traffic must stop.
- A yellow arrow indicates that the “protected” green arrow signal is about to turn to a regular circular green signal, circular red signal or red arrow signal.



Red Arrow Yellow Arrow Green Arrow

Some traffic signals have a combination of “protected” turn arrow signals and “unprotected” circular signals based on traffic demand. At these intersections, both through traffic and turning traffic are controlled by circular signals if no arrow signal is displayed. When arrow and circular signals are both displayed, turning traffic is controlled by the arrow signals and through traffic is controlled by the circular signals. Below are examples of combination signal displays you may see.



When approaching an intersection with a traffic light that has malfunctioned due to a power outage or some other problem, you should approach the intersection and proceed as though the intersection is controlled by a stop sign on all approaches to the intersection. This does not apply if a law enforcement officer or another authorized person is directing traffic, or if another type of traffic control device is in operation.

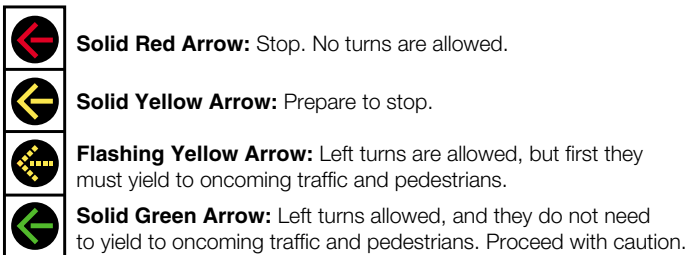
Flashing Signals

The flashing red signal has the same meaning as the stop sign: stop and do not proceed to move until you can enter the intersection without interfering with approaching traffic. The flashing yellow signal has the same meaning as a warning sign. Slow down and proceed with caution.

Left-Turn Traffic Signal Heads

The left-turn traffic signal head is designed to make it easier for drivers to know what to do when making a left turn. The traffic signal head will add a flashing yellow arrow. When the flashing yellow arrow is displayed, left turns are permitted but drivers must yield to oncoming traffic.

Below is what this style left-turn traffic signal head looks like and what drivers should do as the light changes:



Traffic Signs

Shape and color make it possible to recognize the various kinds of highway signs at a glance.

Traffic signs are divided into three types:

1. Regulatory Signs

The eight-sided (or octagon) sign is the *stop* sign. The word “STOP” is printed in white on a red background. The octagonal shape is used for stop signs only. The stop sign is usually posted six to 50 feet from the intersection. When you approach this sign, the law requires you to come to a FULL stop. Do not proceed to move again until you are sure the way is clear.

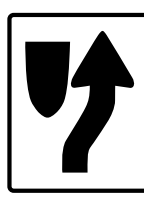


When a stop sign, traffic light, flashing light or other traffic-control device requires a vehicle to stop at an intersection, the driver must stop at the appropriately marked stop line. If there is no stop line or marked crosswalk, the driver must stop before entering the intersection where he/she has a view of the intersecting street.

The *yield* sign is triangular shaped with the point at the bottom. This sign is red and white with the word “YIELD” in large letters at the top. When you approach the yield sign, you must slow down and yield the right of way. Your need to stop depends on the traffic on the intersecting street. To avoid interfering with that traffic, you must stop and wait for it to pass.



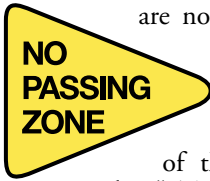
Rectangular and square-shaped signs, which are normally black and white or red and white, are also used to show speed limits and other regulations. These signs will also have messages such as “NO U-TURN” or “KEEP RIGHT EXCEPT TO PASS.” Failure to obey these signs is unsafe as well as a violation of the traffic laws.



The *handicap parking* sign indicates that a space is reserved for persons who qualify for and are displaying a handicap license plate or a dashboard placard.

2. Warning Signs

The pennant-shaped yellow warning sign emphasizes, rather than replaces, the rectangular regulatory “DO NOT PASS” sign. The pennant is located on the left side of the road and points to the beginning of the no-passing zone (solid yellow line in your lane).



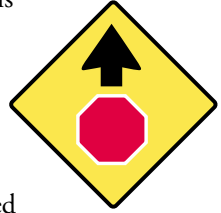
Diamond-shaped signs are also caution or warning signs. They are normally black on yellow, but when they are black on orange, they warn of conditions

for construction or maintenance areas. When you see one of these signs, drive with extra care. One

of the most important caution signs is the “STOP AHEAD” sign. It is placed far

ahead of a stop sign when the driver’s view of the stop sign is blocked by a curve or other objects. Diamond-shaped caution or warning signs that are orange with black messages

warn about construction or maintenance areas. Highway work zones are covered in more detail in *Chapter 4 — Your Driving*.

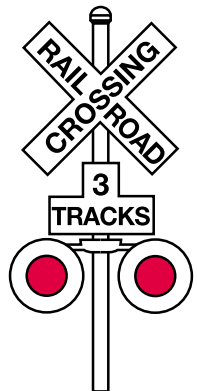


Samples of caution or warning signs



A circular sign, with a black cross and the black letters “RR” on a yellow background, gives advance warning of a railroad crossing. When you see this sign, slow down. Stop if necessary to be sure you can safely clear the crossing.

At the railroad crossing itself is the railroad crossing crossbuck sign. The words “RAILROAD CROSSING” are printed in black on the white crosspieces. If there are multiple tracks at the crossing, they are shown on a sign below the crossbuck. You must stop at a railroad crossing whenever a flagman, signal or gate indicates an approaching train. You must remain stopped until the gate lifts or the signal or flagman indicates that it is safe to proceed. Take the time to check twice in each direction before crossing a railroad track.



The five-sided (or pentagon) sign warns of a school zone or a school crossing. You should be especially watchful for children in these areas. In many school zones, the speed limit is reduced during certain school hours.



3. Guide/Informational Signs

Guide/informational signs give directions, routes, distances and indicate services.

Interstate, U.S. and N.C. highways are numbered and marked.

- Odd-numbered highways generally run north and south.
- Even-numbered highways generally run east and west.
- Route markers for U.S. highways are in the shape of a shield.



- North Carolina route markers are diamond shaped.
- N.C. secondary road signs are rectangular in shape.
- Interstate highways are marked by a red, white and blue shield.



- Signs indicating a nearby hospital, Highway Patrol station or telephone are blue and white.
- Guide signs, also rectangular in shape, may be green, brown or blue. They provide directions and distances. If you are lost, a mileage and directional sign can help you.



Do not endanger other drivers by stopping in the middle of the road to read a sign. When safe to do so, move to the shoulder of the road and wait until you have figured out where you are and which route you should take.



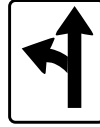
Regulatory Signs



No Bicycles



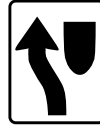
Left Turn Only



Thru & Left



No Left Turn



Keep Left



Keep Right



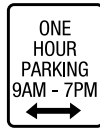
No Right Turn



No U Turns



Double Left Turns



The **DO NOT STOP ON TRACKS** sign reminds the driver not to stop on the railroad track for any reason.

Warning Signs



Signal Ahead



Merging Traffic



Lane Drop



Divided Highway



Cattle Crossing



Deer Crossing



Low Clearance



NO PASSING ZONE



Right Turn



Curve Right



Farm Machinery



Side Road



Divided Highway Ends



Two Way Traffic



Hill



Slippery When Wet



Bike Crossing



SOFT SHOULDER



Side Road



Cross Road



Winding Road



Stop Ahead



YIELD AHEAD



ROAD CLOSED 1500 FT



School



School Crossing

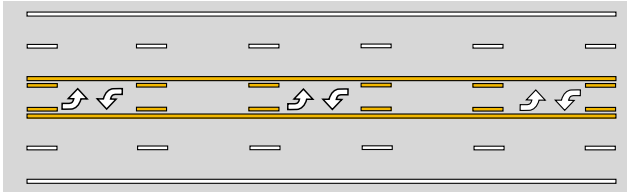


Railroad Crossing

Pavement Markings

Yellow lines separate travel lanes moving in opposite directions. White lines separate travel lanes moving in the same direction. A yellow *skipped* or *broken line* is used as the center line on a two-lane, two-way road where passing with care is permitted in both directions. When continuous, double, solid, yellow lines are the center lines, you cannot cross them to pass in either direction. On a two-lane road, passing with care is permitted if the skipped-yellow line is in your lane.

Single, solid, white lines are used as right-edge lines along the roadway and for guiding traffic traveling in the same direction. Single, solid, yellow lines are used as left-edge lines on divided highways. If you see the reverse, you are traveling in the wrong direction. On certain multi-lane highways, a special center lane is reserved exclusively for two-way left-turn movements in both directions. The two-way left-turn lane must not be used for passing another vehicle or for the purpose of merging into traffic. The marking for this type of lane is shown by the diagram below.



White and yellow pavement “markers” are reflective devices used in the pavement to improve the visibility of marking lines at night when the road is wet. Red markers indicate wrong-way movements for motorists. In some areas, blue reflective pavement markers on roadways indicate the location of nearby fire hydrants or water supplies for fire-fighting units.

Traffic Officers

Under special circumstances, an officer may be directing the flow of traffic. If so, obey the officer’s hand signals instead of the normal traffic signals or signs. Most traffic officers signal drivers to stop by holding up one hand with the palm facing the vehicle and giving a long blast on the whistle. The officer signals drivers to start or to keep moving by motioning with the hand and giving a series of short blasts on the whistle. At night, the traffic officer may signal by using a flashlight.