

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF PORTABLE CHANGEABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (PCMS)

The primary purpose of Portable Changeable Message Signs (PCMS) is to advise the driver of unexpected traffic and routing situations.

Important items when using a Portable Changeable Message Sign are:

General

- A PCMS should be used to supplement conventional signs, pavement marking and lighting.
- If a PCMS is used as an arrow board, it shall meet all of the requirements of an arrow panel, and shall be used solely as an arrow board.
- Performance specifications can be found in the current version of the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MN MUTCD), Part 6, Section 6F.
- A PCMS installed on the shoulder of a road shall be accompanied with Type B channelizing devices (see Layout 4).

Messages

- Each display should contain a single thought.
- The entire display should be readable twice at the posted speed limit prior to work starting.
- An accurate description of the work location or the incident location is critical.
- The PCMS shall have readable up-to-date information. Any delay message should accurately reflect the traffic delay time.
- The PCMS message shall use days of the week not calendar dates.
- The use of abbreviations is discouraged. The entire word should be spelled out whenever space permits.
- If abbreviations are used, they should be easily understood (see the list of standard abbreviations on Pages 6K-xxviii and xix).
- Displays shall not scroll horizontally or vertically across the face of the sign.

For more information on the use of PCMSs, see “*2012 CMS Manual of Practice*” at the following website:

<http://dotapp7.dot.state.mn.us/edms/download?docId=1244587>

Requirements

The specifications for use of a PCMS are in the following table.

Requirements	Type A	Type B	Type C
Line(s) of Message	1 Line	2 Lines	3 Lines
Typical Mounting	Vehicle Mounted	Vehicle or Trailer Mounted	Trailer Mounted
Allowed Usage	Emergency and Incident Mgmt.	Advance Warning	Advance Warning & Advance Notice
Legibility Distance Requirements	Legible at 350 feet	Legible at 750 feet	Legible at 900 feet
Minimum Character Height	10 inches	14 inches	18 inches
Maximum No. of Displays	1	2	* 40 mph or less = 3 * 45 mph or more = 2
Message Cycle	Constant	at least 2 seconds per display	at least 2 seconds per display
Minimum Sign Panel Height	5 feet (rural) 7 feet (urban)	5 feet (rural) 7 feet (urban)	5 feet (rural) 7 feet (urban)
Minimum PCMS Spacing	500 feet	1000 feet	1000 feet

* Posted speed limit prior to work starting.

Table 6F-2

Abbreviations That Shall be Used Only on Portable Changeable Message Signs

Word Message	Standard Abbreviation	Prompt Word That Should Precede the Abbreviation	Prompt Word That Should Precede the Abbreviation
Access	ACCS	---	---
Ahead	AHD	Fog	---
Blocked	BLKD	Lane	---
Bridge	BR*	(Name)	---
Cannot	CANT	---	---
Center	CNTR	---	Lane
Chemical	CHEM	---	Spill
Condition	COND	Traffic	---
Congested	CONG	Traffic	---
Construction	CONST	---	Ahead
Crossing	XING	---	---
Do Not	DONT	---	---
Downtown	DWNTN	---	Traffic
Eastbound	E-BND	---	---
Emergency	EMER	---	---
Entrance, Enter	ENT	---	---
Exit	EX	Next	---
Express	EXP	---	Lane
Frontage	FRNTG	---	Road
Hazardous	HAZ	---	Driving
Highway-Rail Grade Crossing	RR XING	---	---
Interstate	I-*	---	(Number)
It is	ITS	---	---
Lane	LN	(Roadway Name)*, Right, Left, Center	---
Left	LFT	---	---
Local	LOC	---	Traffic
Lower	LWR	---	Level
Maintenance	MAINT	---	---
Major	MAJ	---	Accident
Minor	MNR	---	Accident
Normal	NORM	---	---
Northbound	N-BND	---	---
Oversized	OVRSZ	---	Load
Parking	PKING	---	---
Pavement	PVMT	Wet	---
Prepare	PREP	---	To Stop
Quality	QLTY	Air	---
Right	RT	Keep, Next	---
Right	RT	---	Lane
Roadwork	RDWK	---	Ahead, (Distance)

* This abbreviation, when accompanied by the prompt word, may be used on traffic control other than portable changeable message signs.

** A space and no dash shall be placed between the abbreviation and the number of the route.

Table 6F-3 (sheet 1 of 2)

Abbreviations That Shall be Used Only on Portable Changeable Message Signs

Word Message	Standard Abbreviation	Prompt Word That Should Precede the Abbreviation	Prompt Word That Should Precede the Abbreviation
Route	RT,RTE	Best	---
Service	SERV	---	---
Shoulder	SHLDR	---	---
Slippery	SLIP	---	---
Southbound	S-BND	---	---
Speed	SPD	---	---
State, county, or other non-US or non-Interstate numbered route	(Route Abbreviation determined by highway agency)**	---	Number
Tires with Lugs	LUGS	---	---
Traffic	TRAF	---	---
Travelers	TRVLRs	---	---
Two-Wheeled Vehicles	CYCLES	---	---
Upper	UPR	---	---
Vehicle(s)	VEH, VEHS	---	---
Warning	WARN	---	---
Westbound	W-BND	---	---
Will Not	WONT	---	---

* This abbreviation, when accompanied by the prompt word, may be used on traffic control other than portable changeable message signs.

** A space and no dash shall be placed between the abbreviation and the number of the route.

Table 6F-3 (sheet 2 of 2)

Unacceptable Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Intended Word	Common Misinterpretation
ACC	Accident	Access (Road)
CLRS	Clears	Colors
DLY	Delay	Daily
FDR	Feeder	Federal
L	Left	Lane (Merge)
LT	Light (Traffic)	Left
PARK	Parking	Park
POLL	Pollution (Index)	Poll
RED	Reduce	Red
STAD	Stadium	Standard
TH	Trunk Highway	misunderstood
WRNG	Warning	Wrong

Table 6F-4