

IOWA OUTDOOR
ADVERTISING
REGULATIONS FOR

INTERSTATE
HIGHWAYS



YOUR MESSAGE HERE



Scope and authority

This guide will acquaint you with Iowa laws regulating outdoor advertising devices along interstate highways. For regulations pertaining to outdoor advertising devices on the remaining primary highway system, refer to the publication titled “Guide to Iowa Outdoor Advertising Sign Regulations for non-interstate highways.”

This guide is intended to summarize requirements found in Iowa Code Chapter 306B, 306C and 306D; and Iowa Administrative Rule 761 IAC Chapter 117. These Iowa Code sections were developed in accordance with federal laws directing states to enforce these federal regulations. Although this guide has been developed to aid in the comprehension of these regulations, any interpretation of its contents would be subject to the standards set forth in the statutes themselves.

Iowa’s interstate highways are:

- I-29
- I-35
- I-74
- I-80
- I-235
- I-280
- I-380
- I-480
- I-680

The limits of control by state regulation extend as far as visibility allows in the rural areas. Inside city limits, the limits of control extend 660 feet from the right-of-way line.

Permit required

A completed permit application for each face of the sign must be submitted to the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) for approval prior to erecting the sign along the interstate highway. A copy of the lease between the owner of the sign and the landowner, along with an application fee of \$100 for each face of the sign, must be filed with the application(s). However, if the sign is 32 square feet or less, there is no fee. Once the Iowa DOT performs a field review of the proposed site, the application fee cannot be refunded.

The proposed site will be reviewed by Iowa DOT personnel and if it meets all of the requirements, a permit will be issued. Permits expire on July 1 of each year, unless the appropriate annual renewal fees are paid on or before June 30. Annual renewal fees are based on size and are listed below.

Size (sq. ft.)	Fee
0-32	\$0
33-375	\$15
376-999	\$25
Over 1,000	\$50

General prohibitions

In addition to the zoning and spacing requirements discussed later in this guide, the following general prohibitions apply to advertising signs visible from interstate highways.

1. No sign may encroach on or hang over the highway right of way.
2. No sign may be lighted so it impairs the vision of any motor vehicle driver.
3. No sign may obstruct the view of any highway or railroad to the extent it makes it dangerous to use the highway.
4. No sign may imitate or resemble an official traffic control sign, signal or device.
5. No sign may obscure or physically interfere with an official traffic control sign, signal or device.

6. No sign shall include flashing, intermittent or moving lights.
7. No new advertising sign shall be located beyond 660 feet from the right of way in the rural areas and visible from the main traveled way.

Scenic byways

The erection of advertising devices is prohibited along any state or nationally designated scenic byway. Existing permitted advertising signs along scenic byways may remain in existence, provided that appropriate permit fees are remitted in a timely manner and no relocation or reconstruction of the sign occurs.

Property zoning requirements

The property at the proposed location must be zoned commercial or industrial. The following conditions are not sufficient in meeting this requirement.

- Commercial or industrial areas that are not regulated by comprehensive zoning in accordance with Iowa Code chapters 335 or 414.
- Areas rezoned from a noncommercial or nonindustrial classification to a commercial or industrial classification for the primary purpose of securing approval for outdoor advertising.
- A zone in which limited commercial or industrial activities are permitted incidental to other primary land uses. This may include mixed-use zoning classifications, commercial/noncommercial hybrids, and some commercial classifications that allow the development of noncommercial activities and restrict the development of generally accepted commercial activities.

Property land use requirements

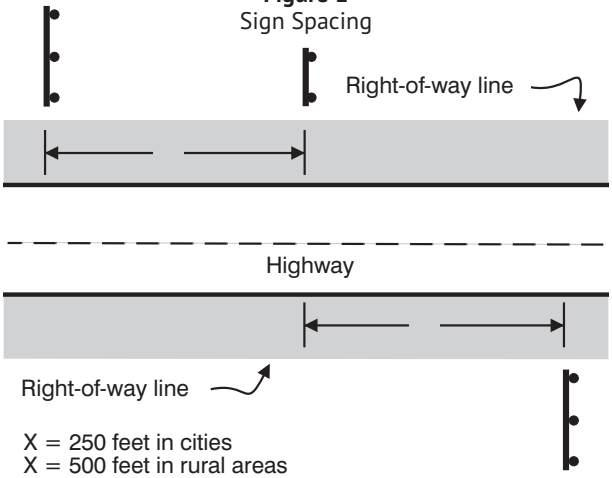
The proposed site must be used for commercial or industrial purposes. For this requirement to be met, at least one commercial or industrial activity must be located on the property assessed as commercial or industrial, and meets the following conditions.

- The activity must be located on the same individual platted parcel of land as the proposed site for the advertising sign.
- The activity must be one defined as commercial or industrial under the local zoning ordinance.
- The activity must be visible from the interstate highway.
- The activity must be staffed at least 20 hours per week, with the hours of operation visibly posted on the premises. A rental storage business is exempt from this requirement if it has 24-hour access for customers and a minimum of 50 units, each occupying at least 50 square feet, individually separated and enclosed by walls.
- The proposed site must be within 750 feet of the “regularly used” portion of the activity. “Regularly used” means that portion meets the conditions listed above.

Spacing requirements

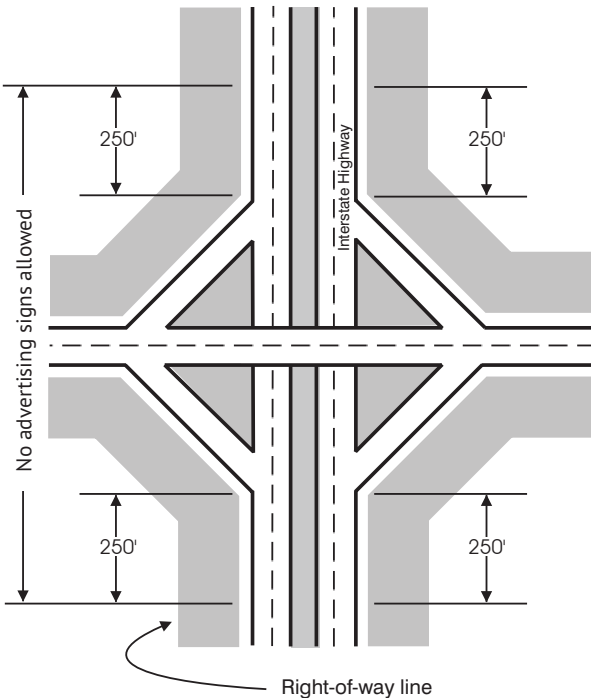
In cities, advertising signs must be located a minimum of 250 feet from any other advertising sign facing the same direction, regardless of which side of the highway the sign is located. In rural areas, advertising signs must be located a minimum of 500 feet from each other when facing the same direction, regardless of which side of the highway the sign is located. (See Figure 1 on the following page.)

Figure 1
Sign Spacing



Advertising signs cannot be located within an interchange area. The interchange area includes all property within the adjacent area and within 250 feet of whichever ramp taper extends the farthest from the interchange (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Advertising Signs
within an Interchange Area



Size requirements

The display area (face) of a single-faced sign is limited to a maximum of 1200 square feet. For signs facing more than one direction, the display areas are limited to a maximum of 750 square-feet-per-direction.

Light emitting diode (LED) displays

LED displays are permitted under the following conditions.

- Adding this type of technology for an existing billboard constitutes a billboard “modification” under Iowa law. Therefore, a new permit application is required.
- Each change of message must be accomplished in one second or less.
- Each message must remain in a fixed position for at least eight seconds.
- No traveling messages (e.g., moving messages, animated messages, full-motion video, or scrolling text messages) or segmented messages are presented.
- The intensity of the illumination does not cause glare or impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle or otherwise interferes with any driver’s operation of a motor vehicle.

Local regulations

Local laws, regulations or ordinances may be more restrictive than state regulations. Applicants must to adhere to both sets of regulations when applying for advertising sign permits. A local zoning authority signature is required on the state permit application certifying the zoning classification for the proposed site.

WHERE TO OBTAIN APPLICATION FORMS AND INFORMATION

Advertising Management
Traffic and Safety Bureau
Iowa Department of Transportation
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50010
Phone: 515-239-1673
Website: www.iowadot.gov/iowaroadsigns



Iowa DOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other nondiscrimination statutes. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Iowa DOT Civil Rights at 515-239-1111 or by email at civil.rights@iowadot.us.