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# **Mailbox Standards**

# JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

**TITLE: Mailbox Standards**

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Installation of a mailbox is allowed within the right-of-way of Jefferson County's public roads if it meets these standards. Jefferson County does not issue permits for mailbox installation, and no permit is required for an installation that meets these standards.

Like anything placed in the right of way, a mailbox and the post on which it is mounted are a potential hazard to users of the county road and a potential impediment to the operation and maintenance of the county road. Each mailbox must therefore be installed properly to ensure that mail can be delivered and that the mailbox does not substantially interfere with the safety of public users of the road nor to the operation and maintenance of the county road.

Each mailbox is installed entirely at the owner's risk. If the mailbox incurs damage during road maintenance or operations, other than through gross negligence on the part of the county, the property owner is not entitled to replacement or compensation. The property owner may be held liable for injuries or damages that may have been incurred as a result of installation that is not in accordance with these standards.

## **Applicable written standards**

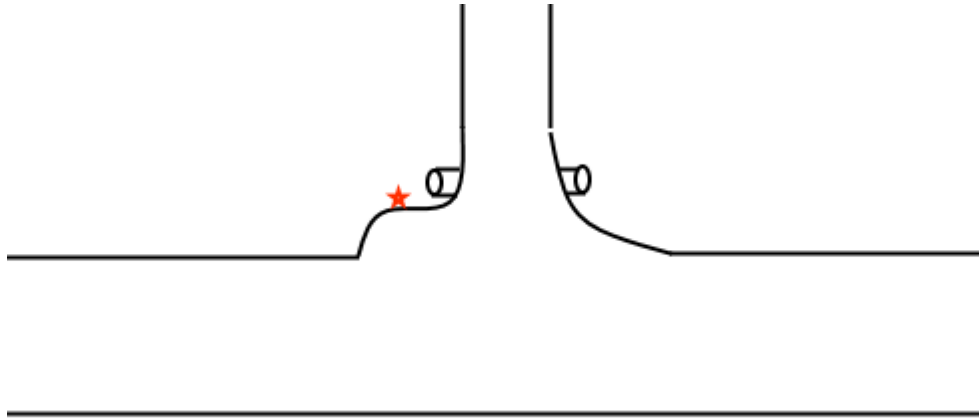
Mailbox owners are expected to consult the most current version of applicable design and installation standards from several sources prior to undertaking any mailbox installation or replacement. The following standards, which were written to align with each other, apply to all mailbox installations:

1. The United States Postal Service (USPS) Mailbox Guidelines. This includes the USPS Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) chapter D041, "Customer Mail Receptacles"; USPS standard USPS-STD-7C, "U.S. Postal Service Standard: Mailboxes, Curbside"; and the overview information available at <https://www.usps.com/manage/mailboxes.htm>. These documents may be obtained online or from your local post office.
2. Chapter 11, "Erecting Mailboxes on Streets and Highways," of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Roadside Design Guide*. This publication may be purchased online through the AASHTO Bookstore by searching for publication number RSDGCH11-4-UL at <https://bookstore.transportation.org>.
3. Chapter 4, "Accessible Routes," of the Americans with Disabilities Act for mailboxes installed in areas with sidewalks. Current ADA standards can be found at <https://www.ada.gov>. Note especially the provisions of section 403.5.1 – "Clear Width."
4. The Jefferson County Public Works Mailbox Standards (this document).

## **General location**

Ideally, your mailbox should be located on the right-hand side of the road in the direction of travel of the postal carrier and on the far side of your driveway approach in that direction of travel.

Even if mounted along your own driveway, consider sight distances for drivers leaving your driveway and ensure that the mailbox does not interfere with their ability to see oncoming traffic.



No mailbox may be placed within the county right of way within 100 feet of the intersection of a county road and any other road, whether public or private. Mailboxes that must be placed near the intersection of a private road and a county road must be placed along the private road beyond the county right of way boundary.

### **Offset from the traveled way**

Mailboxes must be located so that a vehicle stopped at the mailbox is clear of the traveled portion of the county road. This requires a shoulder or pull-out eight feet wide or wider, and a ten-foot-wide area is encouraged. This is not required on roads with curbs or on roads with speed limits of 25 MPH or less when the mailbox can be sited to have good visibility down the road in both directions.

The roadside face of the mailbox must be a minimum of 8 inches from the outside edge of the county-maintained road shoulder. The maintained road shoulder may be paved or gravel or vegetated. Greater offset is encouraged whenever possible to allow the mail carrier to get further out of traffic and to minimize potential damage to your mailbox from snow plows, other maintenance equipment and the traveling public.

### **Mounting height**

USPS requires that the bottom of each mailbox be mounted so that the inside surface of the mailbox is between 41” and 45” from the top of the road surface. Jefferson County recommends that this height be as close as possible to 45”, as mailboxes mounted lower may be hit by snowplows and brooms.

### **Sidewalk clear zone**

Mailboxes mounted in areas with sidewalks must leave at least 36 inches of passable sidewalk behind the back of the mailbox, post or support, whichever is located furthest from the road.

### **Design and installation of post**

4x4 lumber is the ideal post material. Wood supports must be 4 inches by 4 inches or smaller. Round wood posts must be no larger than 4 inches in diameter.

Metal pipe used as posts must be 1.5 inches (inside diameter) or smaller. Metal square or other channel used as posts must not weigh more than 2 pounds per foot. Metal posts of any type must not be attached to anchor plates, though anti-twist flanges are acceptable as long as they do not project more than 10 inches into the ground.

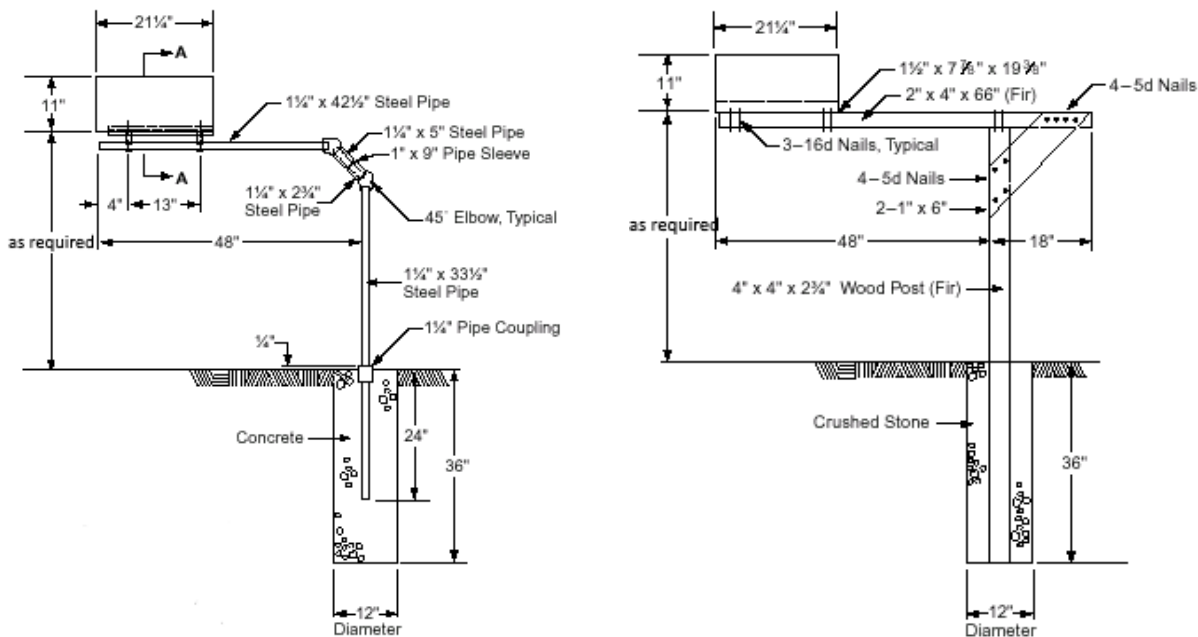
Posts must be embedded no more than 24 inches in the ground and must be placed into compacted sand or gravel only. Posts must not be set in concrete. Posts set in buckets or other containers filled with concrete, sand or other material can be hazardous to motorists and are unacceptable.

Each mailbox or pair of mailboxes must be installed on a post set into the ground. Mailboxes supported by heavier structures such as anything filled with concrete, brick or stone structures, heavy steel structures, heavy timbers, steel wheels and other collectables or antiques are dangerous roadside obstructions and are not acceptable in the right of way.

Note that many commercially available mailbox posts are formed of heavy-duty materials that exceed the maximum specifications of this section. Just because it is available for purchase locally or online does not mean it meets these standards – many nice-looking mailbox posts are unacceptable in the right of way of roads with speed limits above 25 MPH.

## Design of support

The ideal horizontal support for your mailbox is an extended arm that allows you to position the front of the mailbox at its proper setback while keeping the post further from the road. This allows snowplows and brooms to work near or below your mailbox without risking damage to the post. Following are a USPS illustrations of cantilevered wood and metal post designs:



Note that the required height of the base of the mailbox from the ground at the point of the post depends on the elevation difference between the road and the ditch and must be designed to support the mailbox at the proper mounting height above the road surface (see above).

The mailbox must be attached firmly to the support post to prevent it becoming a ready projectile if impacted by a vehicle. Mailboxes may be mounted on top of the support or may swing below the support.

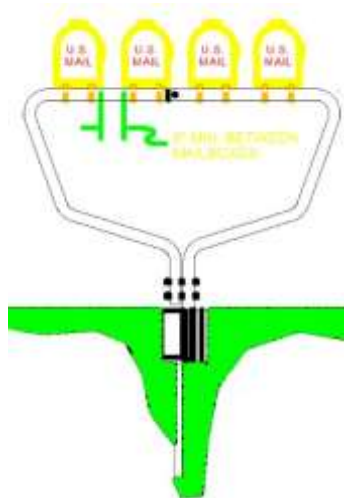
A round reflector on each side of the roadside end of the horizontal support is appreciated by maintenance workers.

### Multiple mailboxes at a single location

Mount no more than two mailboxes on any one support post with the exception of a multiple-mailbox post/support system of approved design. Lightweight newspaper boxes mounted below a mailbox are acceptable and do not count for purposes of the two-mailbox limit.

If more than one post must be installed near each other to hold mailboxes for multiple owners, all posts must be separated by a minimum of three feet.

The only approved design for a post/support system for more than two mailboxes is a commercially available metal pipe consisting of a single post with one end set in the ground, bent at angles necessary to form a loop above ground, the upper horizontal section of which serves as a mounting location for several mailboxes. Following is a WSDOT illustration of this design:



An unacceptable system for mounting more than two mailboxes is one constructed from one or more horizontal pieces of wood or metal attached to ground-mounted post(s). Horizontal beams are typically at windshield height for some vehicles and can penetrate a windshield and cause injury. Many systems constructed by groups of mailbox owners to hold their mailboxes are built with horizontal wood posts and are unacceptable on county right of way. Even commercially available mounts for multiple

mailboxes may be of this type and are unacceptable on county right of way – just because it is for sale does not mean it meets these standards.

### Removal of improperly designed or installed mailboxes

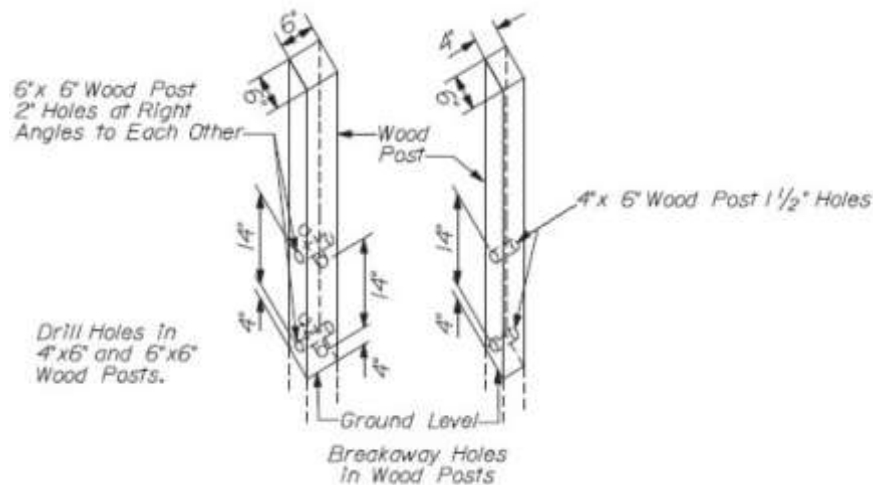
A mailbox installation that does not conform to the requirements of these standards will be considered an unauthorized encroachment on the county right of way.

Any mailbox that is found to violate the intent of these standards shall be removed by the owner upon notification from the Department of Public Works. At the discretion of the Road Maintenance Superintendent based on the apparent hazard to the public or interference with road-maintenance activities, the owner will be granted between 24 hours and 30 days to remove an unacceptable mailbox installation following notification.

If, following such notification, the mailbox is not removed within the specified time, Public Works may remove the installation. In such a case, the owner will be charged the cost of removal.

### Retrofitting mailboxes mounted on improper posts

A mailbox installed on a 4-inch by 6-inch post or a 6-inch square post can be retrofitted to provide the required ability to break away if struck by a vehicle. Retrofitting an oversized post can make its removal unnecessary if the mailbox installation is otherwise in compliance with these standards.



To retrofit a 4-inch by 6-inch post, drill two 1.5-inch holes through the center of the post on its short dimension. The holes must be located 4 inches and 14 inches above ground level.

To retrofit a 6-inch square post, drill two pairs of intersecting 2-inch holes through the center of the post. The pairs of holes must be located 4 inches and 14 inches above ground level.

### Damage to mailboxes by Public Works

Each mailbox is installed entirely at its owner’s risk. If a mailbox incurs damage during road maintenance or operations, its owner is not entitled to replacement or compensation by Jefferson

County. The property owner may even be held liable for injuries, damages or costs that may have been incurred as a result of installation that is not in accordance with the applicable standards, including costs incurred by Public Works in removing noncompliant mailboxes.

Repair of mailbox damage caused by snow, ice or other debris or material directed at the mailbox by a Public Works snowplow or other piece of equipment is the responsibility of the mailbox owner. The mailbox owner is not entitled to replacement or compensation by Jefferson County for such damage.

The Department of Public Works will consider a claim for damages only in the case of a Public Works employee, vehicle or piece of equipment physically striking a mailbox or its post or support provided the mailbox installation met these standards in their entirety, including especially the 8” minimum offset from the maintained shoulder.

### **Questions and concerns**

If you have questions about these standards or want to raise mailbox-related public-safety concern, you may contact the Road Maintenance Division at 360-385-0890 or use the form at

<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/FormCenter/Public-Works-10/County-Road-Problem-Report-54>.