

OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Rules & Guidelines

As of April 2014

DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL RULES

Signs Requiring Permits and Registrations:

The following types of signs may be erected and maintained only after a permit or registration has been issued by the Department. Further, existing signs erected pursuant to the Act can only be re-erected or improved (any change that adds value to the sign) subsequent to the receipt of a permit (see Section 522.50, Permit Application Contents).

a) Signs in business areas other than directional signs, official signs, official notices, public utility signs, or those non-business area signs described in subsections (a), (b), and (c);

b) Any sign listed in subsections (a) through (d) that, after receiving a permit or a registration, is erected again, is enlarged or extended by the sign owner. These signs shall require new permits and payment of the application fee.

Business Area: "Business Area" means any part of an area adjacent to and within 660 feet of the right-of-way which is at any time zoned for business, commercial or industrial activities under the authority of any law of this State; or not so zoned, but which constitutes an unzoned commercial or industrial area. However, as to signs along Interstate highways, the term "business area" includes only areas which are within incorporated limits of any city, village, or incorporated town, as such limits existed on September 21, 1959, and which are zoned for business, industrial or commercial use, or to portions of Interstate highways which traverse other areas where the land use, as of September 21, 1959, was clearly established by State law as business, industrial or commercial. (Section 3.12 of the Act [225 ILCS 440/3.12]) Areas which were zoned as of September 21, 1959 and were not specifically zoned for business, commercial or industrial use as of September 21, 1959 and were outside corporate limits on that date will not be considered business areas along Interstate highways. However, an area zoned for business, commercial or industrial activities that is adjacent to and within 660 feet of an Interstate highway and that is in Township 41 North, Range 10 East of the Third Principal Meridian shall be deemed a business area along Interstate highways. [225 ILCS 440/3.12] (See PA 95-0340, effective January 1, 2008.) Areas which were unzoned on September 21, 1959 may qualify as business areas along Interstate highways if the applicant can show, based on contemporaneous historical records of State actions (e.g., State sales tax records, required State license fees, etc.) that the land on September 21, 1959 was and has continuously been used as business, commercial or industrial. Land unzoned on September 21, 1959, used for agricultural and/or farming activities, including but not limited to forestry, ranging, mining and mineral extraction activities, grazing, wayside produce stands and grain storage bins, will not be considered as business, commercial or industrial land uses for purposes of this Part. Additionally, unzoned land used for railroad tracks and minor sidings; transient or temporary activities not involving permanent buildings or structures; outdoor advertising structures; activities not visible from the main-traveled way; activities conducted in a building principally used as a residence (if the ground floor of the building is more than 50% residence); and activities located in buildings that are not integral to the business operation or that are used to store trade equipment and where business transactions do not take place will not be considered as business, commercial or industrial land uses.

On Premise: "On premise signs" means those signs which advertise activities conducted on the property on which they are located. Variety seed signs, fertilizer signs, and other agricultural product signs are not on premise signs unless at least 50 percent of the sign face is devoted to identification of the farm owner or operator. A sale or lease sign which also advertises any product or service not located upon and unrelated to the business of selling or leasing the land on which the sign is located is not an on premise sign. On Premise are not required to be permitted and are only required to not be erected on or over state right of way.

Off Premise: Signs that are advertising a business, function, entity or service that is not located on the same property as the sign are "Off Premise" signs. Any of premise sign located on private property along a controlled route is required to have a permit and follow the rules and regulations for size, spacing, and lighting.

Illegal signs:

The following signs shall not be erected or maintained:

a) Signs located within the right-of-way of an Interstate or primary highway or on any structure, wire, cable, or other device over or above an Interstate or primary highway right-of-way except the following:

1) Signs designating the name of the railroad which owns the bridge.

- 2) Signs designating the clearance provided by the bridge.
 - 3) Public utility signs.
 - 4) Signs required by the Code.
 - 5) Signs required by the Illinois Vehicle Code [625 ILCS 5].
 - 6) Signs, displays and devices giving specific information in the interest of the traveling public erected and maintained by the Department or by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority.
- b) Signs that attempt or appear to attempt to direct the movement of traffic or which contain wording, color or shape which is similar to official traffic control signs or other traffic control devices
- c) Signs that contain oscillating, rotating, flashing, intermittent or moving light or lights, except the following:
- 1) Signs giving public service information including but not limited to time, weather, date and temperature and multiple message signs with displays that change not more frequently than once every 10 seconds.
 - 2) Pole supported business or brand identification signs inside business areas with constant illumination and color and in which the only movement is a slow rotation of the entire body of the sign so as to be visible from all directions.
 - 3) On premise signs which comply with the multiple message designation.
- d) Signs that are erected, painted or drawn upon trees, rocks or other natural features.
- e) Signs that are obsolete (i.e., advertises something that is no longer there), abandoned (i.e., where no message or display appears for one year, unless such display advertises the availability of the sign), or structurally unsafe or in disrepair, unless such structural conditions may be repaired in accordance with the provisions of the Act, and the sign owner agrees in writing to make the repairs within 30 days after receipt of the notice to remove.
- f) Signs that project beams or rays of light at the travelled way of a State highway or cause such beams or rays to create glare or to impair the vision of a driver of any motor vehicle.
- g) Signs that are located within 1,000 feet of official traffic signs, signals, or devices and obscure or interfere with a driver's view of such sign, signal or device.
- h) Signs that are located within 1,000 feet of approaching, merging or intersecting traffic and obscure or interfere with a driver's view of such traffic.
- i) Signs that require a permit for erection or registration and for which no permit or registration has been issued.
- j) Signs that advertise activities that are illegal under Federal, State or local law in effect at the location of those signs or activities.
- k) Signs (other than multiple message signs) that contain any animated or moving parts.
- l) Signs that violate airport hazard zoning regulations adopted by the Department pursuant to the Airport Zoning Act [620 ILCS 25].
- m) Signs erected adjacent to a scenic byway that is a primary or Interstate highway after August 2, 1996, except Directional, Official, for Sale or Lease, on premises, public utility, or traveling public information signs.
- n) Registered non-conforming signs that are damaged, as defined in Section 522.20 (definition of Damaged Signs), unless maintained or repaired, as defined in Section 522.20 (definition of Erect).

A “sham” business will not be recognized for purposes of erecting outdoor advertising signs. A sham business is anything created for the purpose of appearing like a business in order to allow an outdoor advertising sign to be placed on the property. Business transactions must take place in order to be considered as business, commercial or industrial land use. Sham business’ include but are not limited to: activities located in buildings that are not integral to business operation or that are used to store trade equipment, transient or temporary activities, offices where the only “business” being conducted is a phone being forwarded to another primary site, information kiosks, ect. Commercial or industrial activities recognized for outdoor advertising in the definition of "business area" and "unzoned commercial or industrial area," are those activities located within 660 feet of the nearest edge of the highway right-of-way generally recognized as commercial or industrial by zoning authorities in this State, such as land use devoted to commerce, industry, trade, manufacturing, highway service, highway business, warehouses, offices or similar uses, but for the purpose of determining unzoned commercial and industrial areas does not include the following:

Agricultural, forestry, ranging, mining and mineral extraction activities, grazing and farming activities, including wayside fresh produce stands and grain storage bins;

Railroad tracks and minor sidings;

Transient or temporary activities not involving permanent buildings or structures;

Activities that are conducted in a building that is used to store trade equipment or that is not integral to the business operation where actual business transactions take place;

Outdoor advertising structures;

Activities not visible from a main-traveled way; and

Activities conducted in a building principally used as a residence (if the ground floor of the building is more than 50% residence

APPLICATIONS

Please choose the appropriate application/form that best describes the sign you wish to advertise:

- 1. Business Area Sign: Primary Highway**
Use this application to obtain a permit to erect an off premises sign along a controlled primary Non-Interstate/Expressway route.
- 2. Business Area Sign: Interstate Highway**
Use this application to obtain a permit to erect an off premises sign along a controlled Interstate/Expressway route.
- 3. On-Premise: Interstate Highway**
Due to the passage of HB 2764, On-Premise signs are no longer required to be issued a permit.
- 4. For Sale or Lease Sign: Interstate Highways**
Due to the passage of HB 2764 For Sale or Lease Signs are no longer required to be issued a permit.
- 5. Lodging, Food, Outdoor Recreation or Automotive Service Sign: Interstate Highway**
Due to the passage of HB 2764 these signs are no longer allowed. Any current sign under this designation is considered non-conforming.
- 6. Notification for Outdoor Advertising: Directional or Official Sign**
Use this form to notify the Department that a directional or official sign will be erected. Signs in this category include: service clubs, non-profit groups, welcome to city signs, churches, etc.

Filling out the Application for: Business Area Sign: Primary Highway

FORM: LA 9001 Business Area Sign – Primary Highway

BUSINESS AREA SIGN: PRIMARY HIGHWAY

Signs along a controlled primary highway within the State of Illinois are required to obtain permits from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) prior to being erected, when the advertised content is not located on the property where the sign is to be placed. Off Premises signs along Primary Highways are only allowed within areas that are zoned commercial or industrial or in unzoned areas that meet the Business Area criteria.

RULES FOR ADVERTISING SIGNS ALONG CONTROLLED PRIMARY HIGHWAYS

The following standards are applicable to signs in business areas:

- a) No such sign may be erected which exceeds 30 feet in height, 60 feet in length, and 1200 square feet in display area on each side including border and trim but excluding ornamental base or apron, supports and other structural members, measured by the smallest square, rectangle, triangle, circle, or combination thereof which will encompass the entire display area. (Section 6.01 of the Act) No temporary extensions, cut-outs or ornamentation is allowed which enlarges a sign beyond 1200 square feet as measured herein. Except with respect to repair, rebuilding, or replacement of any sign lawfully erected before July 1, 1993, no such sign may be erected in any county with a population under 2,000,000 that exceeds 800 square feet in surface area per side excluding extensions and cut-outs. The extensions and cut-outs may account for no more than an additional 20% in sign surface area per side.
- b) No more than two such signs may be erected in a facing with such facing not to exceed the size limitation stated in subsection (a) above.
- c) Such signs may be double faced or placed back to back or constructed in a V-type as long as the angle created is less than ninety degrees.
- d) No such sign may be erected along the same side of an interstate highway or expressway within five hundred feet of another such sign structure or location where another such sign has been permitted but not yet erected.
- e) Except with respect to repair, rebuilding, or replacement of any sign lawfully erected before July 1, 1993, when located outside of any incorporated municipality, no such sign may be erected along the same side of a primary highway within 500 feet of another such sign structure or a location where another such sign has been permitted but not yet erected.
- f) Except with respect to repair, rebuilding, or replacement of any sign lawfully erected before July 1, 1993, when located inside of any incorporated municipality, no such sign may be erected along the same side of a primary highway within 300 feet of another such sign structure or a location where another such sign has been permitted but not yet erected.
- g) The spacing requirements described in subsections (d), (e) and (f) above shall not apply to signs where the sign structures are completely separated or screened by buildings, natural surroundings or other obstructions in such manner that only one such sign facing located within such distance is visible at any one time. A sign structure cannot be construed as an obstruction of a sign.
- h) The spacing requirements described in subsections (d), (e) and (f) above shall be measured along the edge of the pavement of the highway between the points of each sign structure which lie closest to the highway pavement but in no event shall the distance between signs be less than the required spacing. (See Section 522. Illustrations D-G.) Signs visible from two or more highways must be considered in spacing measurements along all such highways. Any sign which has received a permit or a registration shall be included in spacing measurements whether or not the permit or registration has been revoked as long as the sign is visible from any place on the main traveled way of the highway. When measuring spacing between signs involving back-to-back or V-type sign structures and all points equidistant between the sign faces are on a line perpendicular to the edge of pavement, the measurement between such sign structures will be taken along the edge of pavement as shown in Section 522. Illustrations K and L. If the measurements cannot conform to those shown in Section 522. Illustrations K and L, the measurements for signs involving back-to-back or V-type sign structures shall be made between the points of each sign structure which lie closest to the highway pavement.

i) Outside of an incorporated municipality, no sign structure may be erected along an interstate highway or expressway adjacent to or within 500 feet of an interchange, rest area or weigh station, such 500 feet to be measured along the main traveled way from the beginning or ending of pavement widening at the exit from or entrance to the main traveled way. (See Section 522.Illustration C.)

j) The requirements of this Section shall not be construed to apply to or to impose additional limitations on directional signs, official signs, official notices, public utility signs, signs advertising the sale or lease of property on which they are located, or on premise signs nor shall such signs be counted nor shall measurements be made from them for purposes of determining compliance with subsections (d), (e) and (f) above.

Illustrations referenced above can be found

here: <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/092/09200522sections.html>

APPLICATION CONTENTS & INSTRUCTIONS

Application Instructions

1) **Permit No.** – Leave blank. For Department use only.

2) **Owner of Proposed Sign** – Please include name, address, phone number and email address of the owner of the proposed sign. Email addresses provided will strictly be used for communicating with the owner on issues regarding the permit (such as status, approval, etc.) and will not be used for, or distributed for commercial use.

3) **Owner of Land** – Please include name, address and phone number of the owner of property that the sign will be located on.

4) **Proposed Sign Location** – Please include the county, marked route (e.g., ILL 3, US 45, I-70, etc.) and location along route by referencing a landmark (e.g., crossroad or mile marker). When choosing a landmark, please do not use only locally or regionally known locations. Future reviewers should be able to locate this sign based solely on this location description. GPS coordinates given should be accurate enough to be able to ascertain the location of the sign.

5) **Sign will be located** – Please check the box indicating how many feet the proposed location will be from the nearest existing or proposed permitted sign. Do not measure from any on-premises or property for sale sign. The only signs to be measured from are on the same side of the road as proposed location and advertisement is not relevant to the property.

6) **For signs located within incorporated limits** – If the proposed location is within the incorporated limits of a municipality, give the name of the municipality and the zoning of the property that the sign will be located on. Proof of zoning must be submitted with application.

7) **For signs located outside incorporated limits** – If the sign will be located on property that is outside the corporate limits of a municipality or the property is zoned by a county or township, proof of zoning must be submitted with application.

8) **For signs located in unzoned areas** – For a sign to be permitted on an unzoned property, the sign must be located within an unzoned commercial or industrial area as defined in Section 522.20 of the Administrative Code. Please indicate if the sign will be located within 600 feet of a commercial or industrial activity, and if the sign is on the same side of the highway as the activity.

9) **Description of Proposed Sign** – Please indicate the type of face that the sign will have.

10) **Size** – Please indicate the width, height and height from the ground to the bottom molding of the face of the sign. The dimensions given shall measure the smallest square, rectangle, triangle, circle or combination that will encompass the entire display area. If one side of the sign provides for more display area than another, the measurements will be made on the larger side.

11) **Structure** – Please indicate the details of the sign structure.

12) **Vertical Supports** – Please indicate the material type and number of the vertical supports for the sign.

13) **Sign Face** – Please indicate type of material the face of sign will be made of.

14) **Will sign have lighting** – Please indicate if the sign will have lighting and if so, what the type of lighting will be.

15) **Will sign be other than rectangular** – If the sign will be any other shape than rectangular, please indicate such and attach a sketch showing the shape and dimensions of the sign.

16) **Airport Restrictions** – Please indicate if the sign will or will not be within 2 miles of any publicly-owned airport. If sign will be within 2 miles of a publicly-airport then give name of the airport at No. 2. No. 3 and the remainder of this section are to be used by the Division of Aeronautics only. Do not sign and date this section.

17) **Certificate** – This section combines the former illegal/abandoned sign owner certification with the application certification. Owner of proposed sign (from Item 2) should sign. If owner is a business or corporation, an individual with that business or corporation must sign and give title. If a third party is completing the application for an individual or business, responsible party listed as owner under Item 2 shall sign the certificate. The certificate must be properly notarized.

18) **Return completed permit forms** – Mail completed application, fee and supporting documents to indicated address. Per Administrative Code, Section 522.50, the following documents shall be attached to the application (please refer to [Admin. Code Section 522.50](#) for concise description of what is required):

A) Verification of zoning classification for the proposed sign location.

B) Site drawing to include:

- Exact location of sign,
- Distance as measured along the edge of pavement between proposed sign and the nearest permitted or non-permitted off-premises sign,
- Signs over 150 square feet require sketch to be prepared or approved by an Illinois licensed land surveyor.

C) For signs that are 150 square feet and larger, a current title commitment or other evidence of title proving ownership of the proposed site. This requirement verifies property owner (Item 3) has authority to lease property.

D) If sign owner listed in Item 2 does not own the property that the sign will be on, a Certificate of Good Corporate Standing from the Illinois Secretary of State will be required. If the owner listed in Item 2 is not registered with the Illinois Secretary of State as a LLC or Corporation, a note stating such is all that is required.

E) If sign owner listed in Item 2 does not own the property a copy of a fully executed site lease, contract to purchase or proof of consent to erect and maintain a sign on the site is required.

F) A copy of the written notice submitted by applicant to the municipality or county indicating an application has been filed with the Department of Transportation.

**Filling out the Application for:
*Business Area Sign: Interstate Highway***

FORM: LA 9002 Business Area Sign – Interstate Highway

BUSINESS AREA SIGN: INTERSTATE HIGHWAY

Signs along a controlled interstate highway within the State of Illinois are required to obtain permits from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) prior to being erected, when the advertised content is not located on the property where the sign is to be placed. .

RULES FOR ADVERTISING SIGNS ALONG (ROUTE)

Under construction. Please check back later.

APPLICATION CONTENTS

Checklist...Under construction. Please check back later.

**Filling out the Application for:
Notification for Outdoor Advertising: Directional or Official Sign**

FORM: LA 9008 Notification for Outdoor Advertising - Directional or Official Sign

NOTIFICATION FOR OUTDOOR ADVERTISING: DIRECTIONAL OR OFFICIAL SIGNS AND NOTICES

Signs meeting the below definitions and rules are not required to obtain a permit but are required to notify the department using the form below.

RULES FOR DIRECTIONAL OR OFFICIAL SIGNS ALONG ANY ROUTE)

"Official notices" are service club and religious notices and public service signs.

The following standards apply to religious notices, service club notices, and public service signs.

- a) Service club and religious notices shall not exceed 8 square feet in area.
- b) Public service signs may be located only on school bus stop shelters that are authorized by and are located at places approved by city, county or State law, regulation or ordinance. Only safety slogans or messages may be displayed on the sign and such slogans or messages shall occupy not less than 50 percent of the sign area. The remaining 50 percent may contain only the identity of the donor, sponsor or contributor of the shelter. Such signs may not exceed 32 square feet in area. Not more than one sign on each shelter shall face in any one direction.

"Official signs" are signs erected and maintained by public officers or public agencies within their territorial or zoning jurisdiction and pursuant to and in accordance with direction or authorization contained in Federal, State or local law for the purposes of carrying out an official duty or responsibility. Historical markers authorized by State law and erected by State or local government agencies or non-profit historical societies are considered official signs.

"Directional signs" are signs containing directional information about public places owned or operated by Federal, State or local governments or their agencies; publicly or privately owned natural phenomena; historic, educational, cultural, scientific and religious sites; areas of natural or scenic beauty; or areas naturally suited for outdoor recreation which are deemed to be in the interest of the traveling public.

The following standards shall apply to directional signs.

- a) To be eligible for determination, privately owned attractions or activities must be nationally or regionally known, and of outstanding interest to the traveling public. The Department will make a determination of eligibility for each attraction or activity based on the information provided in the submission, including any licenses held. In making this determination, the Department will avail itself of the experience and knowledge of selected groups in the specific type of attraction or activity being considered. These groups shall include, but not be limited to, commissions, boards, other agencies and/or other State Departments.
- b) No such sign may be located within 2,000 feet of an interchange, or intersection at grade along an Interstate highway or expressway (measured from the nearest point of the beginning or ending of pavement widening at the exit from or entrance to the main traveled way).
- c) No such sign may be located within 2,000 feet of a rest area, parkland or scenic area.
- d) No two such signs facing the same direction of travel shall be spaced less than one mile apart.
- e) Not more than three such signs pertaining to the same activity and facing the same direction of travel may be erected along a single route approaching the activity.
- f) Such signs located along Interstate highways shall be within seventy-five air miles of the activity.
- g) Such signs located along primary highways shall be within fifty air miles of the activity.
- h) The message on such signs shall be limited to the identification of the attraction or activity and directional information useful to the traveler in locating the attraction, such as mileage, route numbers, or exit numbers.

Descriptive words or phrases, and pictorial or photographic representations of the activity or its environs are prohibited.

i) No such sign shall exceed the following limits:

1) Maximum area – one hundred fifty square feet

2) Maximum height – twenty feet

3) Maximum length – twenty feet

j) All dimensions include border and trim, but exclude supports.

APPLICATION CONTENTS

Checklist...Under construction. Please check back later.