



There are two primary types of beacons:

Sign Beacons

These beacons are mounted on a stop sign, speed limit sign, or warning sign to supplement the sign message. The beacons call attention to an unusual intersection or condition. Interactive beacons have the ability to detect vehicle speeds and activate flashers when motorists aren't heeding the warning.

Intersection Beacons

These beacons are hung on a wire or cable above intersections where a traffic study indicates the intersection has an unusual traffic or physical condition. Interactive beacons can detect vehicles approaching the intersection and trigger the flashers.

Beacon Installation

Communities frequently request installation of flashing beacons. An engineering study is conducted to determine if a beacon is needed

by reviewing the location, crash history, roadway features, vehicle speeds, number of pedestrians and/or school children and sight restrictions. MoDOT has installed almost 600 flashing beacons throughout the state.

- ▶ In school zones, beacons may give pedestrians, children and parents a false sense of security. Communities often request beacons with the intent of improving crossing safety, rather than attempting to solve the underlying problem such as: no established routes to and from school, no pedestrian safety programs or no adult crossing guards. Children are not automatically more visible to drivers because a beacon is in place.
- ▶ Another common misconception is that a beacon, used alone or in conjunction with a speed or warning sign, will slow down traffic or improve a location's safety. Drivers tend to drive at a speed that they perceive to be safe based on their surroundings, such as pavement width, roadway features (i.e. curves) and type and number of developments.

What to know about Flashing Beacons



For more information about flashing beacons contact:

Missouri Department of Transportation
888-ASK-MODOT (275-6636)
www.modot.org

Missouri has the **seventh-largest highway system** in the country with more than 32,000 miles of state roadways and almost 600 flashing beacons on those roadways; making flashing beacons an important issue.

A flashing beacon is a flashing red or yellow light used to capture motorists' attention and warn them about an unusual situation. Flashing beacons are very effective when used under the right conditions.

Flashing Flashing Flashing Beacons

When Are Beacons Used?

Beacons are best used to alert motorists of unusual conditions that are not readily apparent, such as roadway obstructions, uncommon roadway conditions, narrow bridges or unusual conditions hidden from the motorists' view. At intersections, they're used where traffic or physical conditions do not justify conventional traffic signals, but where crash rates indicate the possibility of a special need.

In order for a beacon to be effective, the driver must consistently see an unusual condition immediately after seeing the beacon. They must view the condition as serious enough to justify having been alerted.

Misuse of Beacons

When beacons are used improperly and installed at locations where they are not needed, they soon lose much of their effectiveness and cease to command the public's respect. After continually being exposed to a beacon that doesn't appear to be accompanied by an unusual condition, drivers actually stop "seeing" the beacon. When this happens, drivers may disregard beacons that are truly needed. Even one improper installation greatly reduces the effectiveness of essential beacons.

MoDOT strives for standardization of traffic control, thus meeting driver expectations. It is MoDOT's intent that when a driver encounters a traffic-control device, he or she will know what to expect because of previous encounters with similar devices.

Types of Beacons

Although all beacons flash, interactive beacons are more effective than conventional beacons because they only flash when an unusual condition is present.

