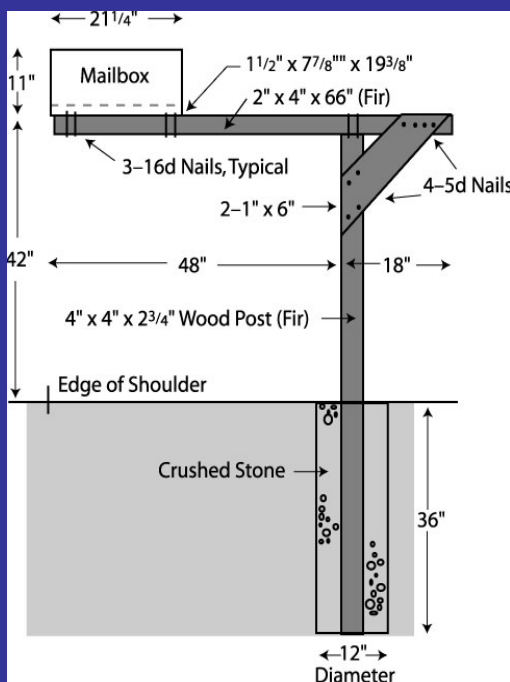


Making County Roadsides SAFER



In the top photo, a brick pillar caused major damage in this crash test. In the second photo, a mailbox support becomes a safety hazard.



Mailbox support approved by US Postal Service.

Roadside Accidents

Almost *half* of the accidents that occur on our county roads involve a single vehicle leaving the roadway. Occupants are much more likely to be seriously injured if the errant vehicle encounters an obstruction next to the roadway:

Hazards include:

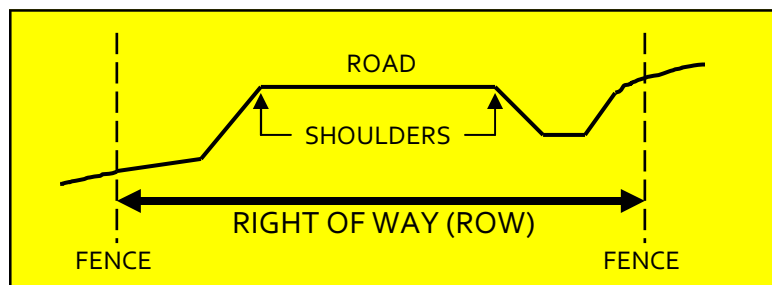
- Entrances with steep side slopes or retaining walls.
- Non-standard mailboxes and supports.
- Fences encroaching upon the right-of-way.
- Footbridges crossing the drainage ditch.

Who's responsible for roadside safety?

We all are!

Underlying ownership of right-of-way on almost all county roads is retained by the adjoining property owner. However, the road easement provides the county certain rights to build and maintain the roadway with associated drainage improvements. Consequently, landowners do not pay taxes for that portion of their property.

If an obstruction within the right-of-way causes an accident, the property owner, tenant, and the county as well, could be held liable.



Cutaway view of a right of way

How do we make county roadsides safer?

Roadside safety hazards



1. Prevent obstructions from being constructed.
2. Remove potentially hazardous obstructions.

No one knowingly installs a hazard next to the roadway. Property owners and tenants that have built structures (i.e. obstructions) within the right-of-way are typically trying to improve aesthetics, convenience, or access and were not aware of the safety implications.

What's happening now...

In order to address roadside obstruction concerns, we are:

- Completing an inventory of structures within the right-of-way.
- Preparing guidelines to develop a "recovery area" for vehicles that leave the roadway.
- Contacting landowners/tenants with the possibility of providing assistance to remove hazards on a safety priority basis¹. (Owners will be contacted **before** any action is taken.)

Wondering if you can...

- Install a unique mailbox support?
- Improve the entry to your property
- Work in the ROW to fill, dig, place objects, etc.?

Not all structures constitute a serious hazard. A structure located on a roadway with good visibility and no accident history or with reduced speeds and lower traffic volumes may not be a problem.

Please contact us:

¹Section 318 of the Iowa Code requires the county Board of Supervisors to "cause all obstructions in highways, in their respective jurisdictions, to be removed." (The definition of highway includes the right-of-way.) The Code further states that a permit must be obtained from the county before any work begins in a county right of way.