HIGHTECH SIGNS
for any visual solution

SHOP TALK

Readability of Signs

General Rules

Determining the style and size of letters and the amount of text that should be included, will depend upon the circumstance in which a sign will be read. A letter style and size that is suitable for viewing by a pedestrian may be totally impractical when viewed from a car traveling 30-60 MPH.. Elegant fonts and scripts are not normally suitable for highway signs. Bold, sanserif fonts give best results.

Contrast between text color and the background is vital; the greater the contrast the better. For illuminated signs, the contrast rule applies to both day and night viewing. Sign ordinances sometimes require that backgrounds, of illuminated cabinet signs, be opaque, so, for instance, a dark red text on a white background would be highly visible by day but at night, with a blacked out background, would appear as dark red text on black which would be virtually unreadable.

The Effect of Speed

A vehicle traveling at a speed of 45 MPH, travels 66 feet per second. From the chart, it can be seen that, for maximum impact, a 12″ letter has a readable distance of 120′.The driver of a car travelling at 45 MPH towards the sign, would have approximately 2 seconds to read, comprehend and possibly react to the sign's message. Research shows that for a message that is only 3 or 4 words long, the read/comprehend/react time is closer to 8 rather than 2 seconds (and more for older viewers).

Conclusion

Text on highway sign should be as BRIEF and BOLD as possible with maximum contrast. Optimum size will vary with traffic speed. (The same general guidelines apply to advertising text and graphics on vehicles).

Letter Visibility Chart

Maximum Readable Distance	Readable Distance for Maximum Impact	Letter Height
100′	30′	3″
150′	40′	4″
200′	60′	6″
350′	80′	8″
400′	90′	9″
450′	100′	10″
525′	120′	12″
630′	150′	15″
750′	180′	18″
1000′	240′	24″
1250′	300′	30″
1500′	360′	36″
1750′	420′	42″
2000′	480′	48″
2250′	540′	54″
2500′	600′	60″