

MaineDOT Mailbox Policy

A guide for property owners on
state and state-aid highways



MaineDOT



This Mailbox Policy provides information to property owners on state and state-aid highways who have installed, or wish to install, a mailbox in MaineDOT's right-of-way.

The property along each side of a state highway or a state-aid highway (one that connects local roads to a state highway) is known as the right-of-way (ROW). MaineDOT owns the ROW on all state and state-aid roads. There is no standard ROW width for every road, but the MaineDOT Region Office that covers your town can provide information on the width of the ROW along a specific part of a state or state-aid road. See the map of "MaineDOT Regions" with contact information at the end of this Mailbox Policy.

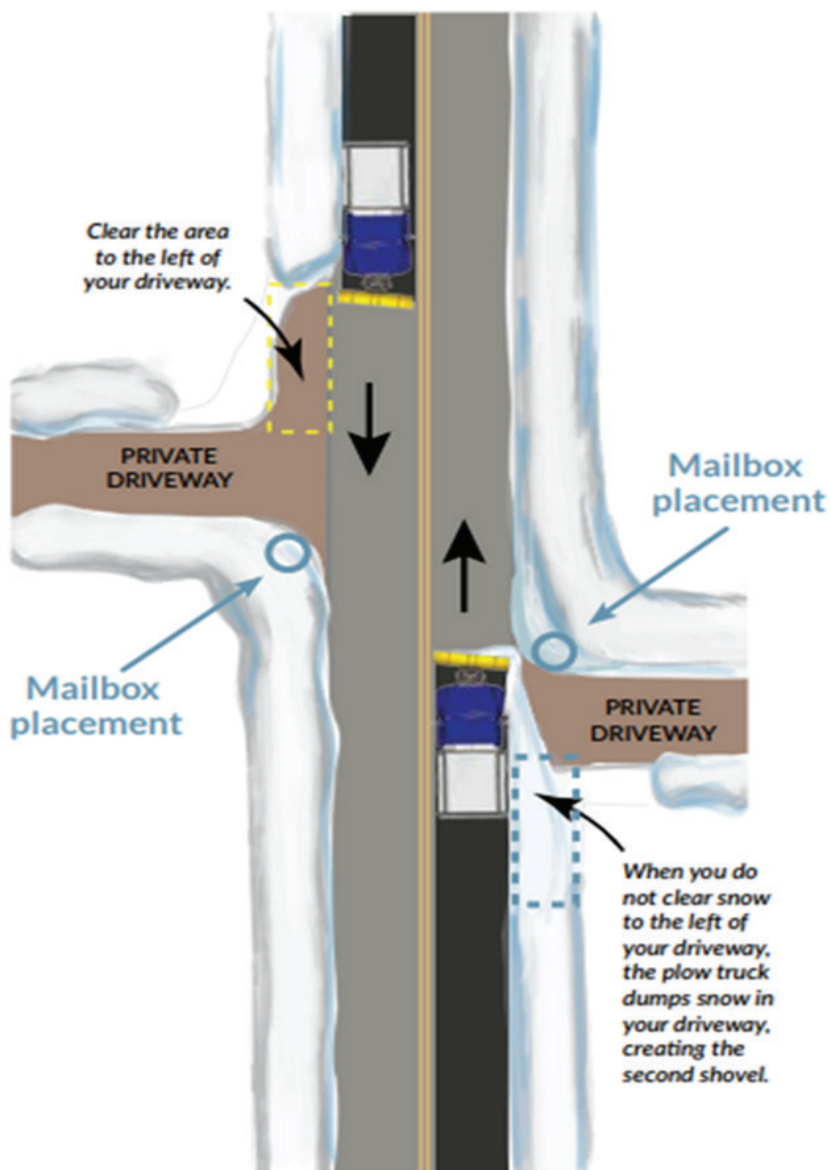
Highway ROW needs to be kept clear for motorist safety and so that road crews have room to work. While mailboxes are allowed in the ROW of state and state-aid roads, there are two very important conditions.

- The mailbox cannot create an obstacle or a safety hazard for motorists or road crews. See the Tier 1 discussion below on the types of mailbox installations that are acceptable.
- A mailbox is installed entirely at the owner's risk. If the mailbox is damaged during any MaineDOT snowplowing or other road work, the owner is not entitled to compensation or replacement.

This Mailbox Policy includes details on the location, distance from the road edge, and post size, type, and other information for property owners to help minimize safety hazards and reduce the chances of damage to the mailbox.

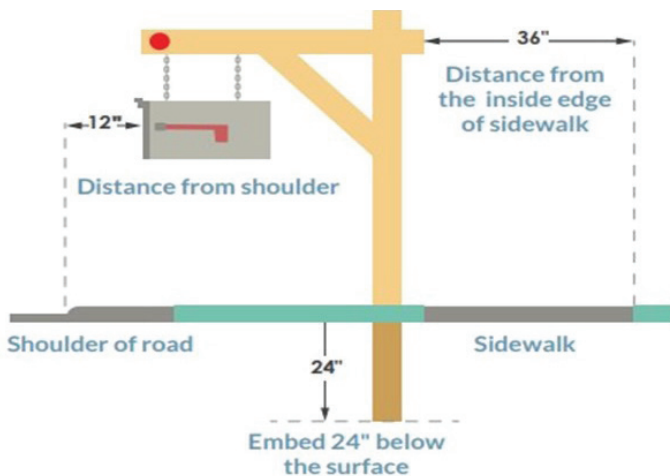
Location: Whenever possible, your mailbox should be after your driveway opening from the street.

Distance: The mailbox should be set back from the road shoulder (sometimes called the breakdown lane), so that the mailbox door/lid is at least 12 inches back from the part of the shoulder that is normally plowed or 12 inches back from the curb. We encourage a wider distance to lessen the chance of damage to your mailbox during snowplowing or other road work.



Likewise, to decrease the chance of snowplow damage, MaineDOT recommends that the bottom of the mailbox be 45 inches above the highway shoulder. **See Figure A.**

Figure A



Posts: As a starting place, a mailbox post must be sturdy enough to hold up the mailbox, but not so rugged that it presents a hazard to vehicles that leave the road. This means that if a mailbox post is hit by a vehicle, it needs to break away easily.

This Mailbox Policy provides guidance to property owners by creating three tiers of mailbox posts, much like a traffic light has three tiers – green for go, yellow for proceed with caution, and red for stop.

Just as liability can result from an accident from failing to heed a traffic light, if a mailbox does not meet the standards outlined in Tier 1 below, a property owner may be more likely to be held liable for injuries or property damage if a vehicle goes off the road and hits the mailbox installation.

Tier 1 – Green light – Acceptable mailbox installations

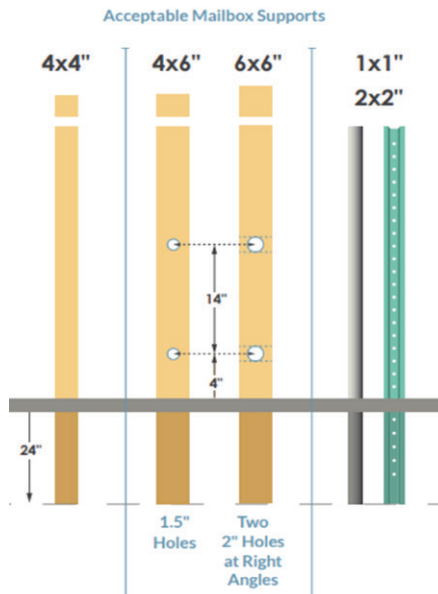
The mailbox posts in Tier 1 are acceptable support posts. Like the green light on a traffic signal that means you can move forward, these types of posts are allowed to support mailboxes in MaineDOT's ROW. They include:



- Post constructed from wooden material 4" x 4" in size.
- Post constructed from wooden material that is 4" x 6" or 6" x 6" with appropriately drilled holes.
- Post constructed from steel or aluminum pipe no larger than 2" in diameter.

See **Figure B** showing these post types.

Figure B



It is often a good idea to use an extended-arm post with a free-swinging suspended mailbox, like the one shown in **Figure B** above. This allows snowplows to sweep near or under the box with less chance of damage. A red reflector on the part of the box closest to the road can also help snowplow drivers to see your mailbox during storms.



Tier 2 – Yellow light – Non-conforming mailbox installations



The mailbox posts in Tier 2 are non-conforming support posts. Like the case with a yellow light on a traffic signal, the property owner must proceed with caution in choosing to install any of these non-conforming posts. They include:

- Post constructed from wooden material larger than 4" on any given side without drilled holes as shown in Figure B above.
- Post constructed from metal larger than 2" in diameter.
- Post constructed from any other material, including concrete, stone, or granite, not exceeding 4" on any given side.

If a non-conforming mailbox installation is discovered, the Region Engineer may, after assessing the situation, send a notice to inform the property owner of the non-conforming installation and recommend compliance by replacing the post with a type described in Tier 1 above.



Tier 3 – Red light – Prohibited mailbox installations



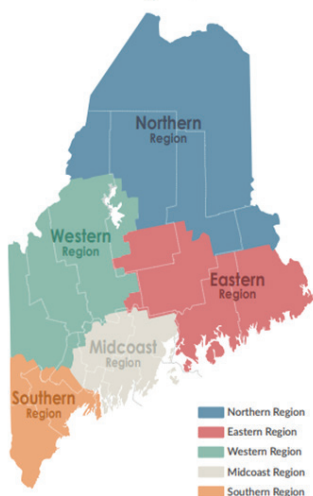
The mailbox installations in Tier 3 are prohibited and merit a red light since they are deadly fixed objects that violate Maine law set out in Section 1401-A of Title 23 of the Maine Revised Statutes. These types of installations could result in injury or death if struck by a vehicle that leaves the road. They include:

- Any Tier 2 post that could cause a direct risk of harm to the traveling public based on roadway geometry, historical crash data, speed limit, and any other factors, as determined by the Region Engineer.
- Post constructed from any material larger than 6" on any given side.
- Post constructed from any material filled with concrete or other solid, durable material.
- Post constructed from steel similar to I-beams.
- Post constructed from objects intended for other purposes, such as milk cans filled with concrete or plow blades.
- Any other post deemed to be a deadly fixed object by the Region Engineer.

If a prohibited installation is discovered, the Region Engineer will send a notice to the property owner informing the owner of the violation and requesting its removal within a specified time not longer than 30 days. If the owner fails to comply, MaineDOT may remove the installation and seek reimbursement from the property owner for all costs.



MaineDOT Regions



- Northern Region (5)**
207-764-2200
41 Rice Street | Presque Isle, ME 04769
- Eastern Region (4)**
207-941-4500
219 Hogan Road | Bangor, ME 04401-5603
- Western Region (3)**
207-562-4228
932 U.S. Route 2 East | Wilton, ME 04294
- Midcoast Region (2)**
207-624-8200
66 Industrial Drive | 98 SHS | Augusta, ME 04333-0098
- Southern Region (1)**
207-885-7000
51 Pleasant Hill Road | Scarborough, ME 04070-0358

Mailbox design and installation standards are available from several sources. However, the following national standards are widely accepted.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) Mailbox Guidelines.
usps.com/manage/mailboxes.htm

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Roadside Design Guide. Chapter 11 (Erecting Mailboxes on Streets and Highways) deals with construction of privately owned mailboxes and is less focused on postal operations. store.transportation.org/Item/PublicationDetail?ID=1807

In addition, if the mailbox is installed in an area with sidewalks, the sidewalks must remain compliant with ADA requirements:

American Disabilities Act (ADA) has minimum requirements to ensure sidewalks and other facilities are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities. ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards.htm#c4



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