



“Shake Your Mailbox” Information Sheet

“SHAKE YOUR MAILBOX” IN OCTOBER

What does “Shake Your Mailbox” mean?

- “Shake Your Mailbox” is an activity designed to get homeowners involved in proactive mailbox maintenance.
- Road agencies recognize damage to mailboxes is inconvenient to residents, and want to minimize frustrations by encouraging preventative maintenance in autumn.
- Although the Michigan Department of Transportation and many local road agencies have policies for addressing mailboxes damaged by a direct snowplow hit during winter maintenance operations, they vary by county. One thing is consistent; road agencies are not responsible for mailbox damage caused by snow thrown when clearing the roadway.
- Local community organizations are encouraged to help homeowners and renters who may be unable to check for mailbox damage and make needed repairs.

What should residents do?

- Residents should prepare mailboxes for winter by tightening screws and ensuring the post and box itself are secure enough to endure large amounts of thrown snow. If the mailbox or post moves when shaken, perhaps the box or post should be repaired or replaced before winter.

What you need to know about mailboxes?

- Mailboxes are one of the only objects allowed by law to be placed in the road right-of-way.
- The location and construction of mailboxes must conform to specific rules and regulations. Information on rules and regulations are available on the United States Postal Service (USPS) website at <https://www.usps.com/manage/mailboxes.htm>.

- According to the International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health, each year as many as 100 people globally are killed in accidents involving rural mailboxes. Many others are permanently injured when mailboxes and their supports penetrate a vehicle's windshield.
- A mailbox that is not secure may also become a liability risk for homeowners. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety warns "private individuals and corporations, as well as governmental entities, may be liable for their roles in creating or maintaining highway hazards."

Mailbox construction tips for Michigan residents

- Only one support should be used per box or group of boxes.
- Wood posts should be no more than 4 ½ inches diameter if round, 4" x 4" inches if rectangular.
- Metal pipes should be standard steel or aluminum with no more than a 2-inch inside diameter.
- Supports should yield or collapse if struck. They should bend or fall away from a vehicle so as not to pose a deadly threat to drivers.
- Supports cannot be fitted with an anchor plate (metal post), embedded over 24 inches into the ground, nor set in concrete.
- Mailboxes must be constructed of sheet metal, plastic or similar weight materials, with weight not to exceed 11 pounds.
- The United States Postal Service asks that roadside mailboxes be 36 to 42 inches off the ground, and 8 to 12 inches behind the shoulder or the curb.
- A mailbox and its support will be considered hazardous to motorists when the support exceeds the described structural limitations. This could create a liability concern for the homeowner.
- Any mailbox and its support considered to be a hazard should be removed from the road right-of-way and replaced.

Michigan's state and local road agencies follow the standards published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials in "A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways."