

*State transportation department*—the transportation department of one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico.

*Use and occupancy agreement*—the document (written agreement or permit) by which the transportation department approves the use and occupancy of highway right-of-way by utility facilities or private lines.

*Utility facility*—privately, publicly or cooperatively owned line, facility, or system for producing, transmitting, or distributing communications, cable television, power, electricity, light, heat, gas, oil, crude products, water, steam, waste, storm water not connected with highway drainage, or any other similar commodity, including any fire or police signal system or street lighting system, which directly or indirectly serves the public. The term utility shall also mean the utility company inclusive of any substantially owned or controlled subsidiary. For the purposes of this part, the term includes those utility-type facilities which are owned or leased by a government agency for its own use, or otherwise dedicated solely to governmental use. The term utility includes those facilities used solely by the utility which are a part of its operating plant.

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#### § 645.209 General requirements.

(a) *Safety*. Highway safety and traffic safety are of paramount, but not of sole, importance when accommodating utility facilities within highway right-of-way. Utilities provide an essential public service to the general public. Traditionally, as a matter of sound economic public policy and law, utilities have used public road right-of-way for transmitting and distributing their services. The lack of sufficient right-of-way width to accommodate utilities outside the desirable clear zone, in and of itself, is not a valid reason to preclude utilities from occupying the highway right-of-way. However, due to the nature and volume of highway traffic, the effect of such joint use on the traveling public must be carefully con-

sidered by transportation departments before approval of utility use of the right-of-way of Federal-aid or direct Federal highway projects is given. Adjustments in the operating characteristics of the utility or the highway or other special efforts may be necessary to increase the compatibility of utility-highway joint use. The possibility of this joint use should be a consideration in establishing right-of-way requirements for highway projects. In any event, the design, location, and manner in which utilities use and occupy the right-of-way of Federal-aid or direct Federal highway projects must conform to the clear roadside policies for the highway involved and otherwise provide for a safe traveling environment as required by 23 U.S.C. 109(1)(1).

(b) *New above ground installations*. On Federal-aid or direct Federal highway projects, new above ground utility installations, where permitted, shall be located as far from the traveled way as possible, preferably along the right-of-way line. No new above ground utility installations are to be allowed within the established clear zone of the highway unless a determination has been made by the transportation department that placement underground is not technically feasible or is unreasonably costly and there are no feasible alternate locations. In exceptional situations when it is essential to locate such above ground utility facilities within the established clear zone of the highway, appropriate countermeasures to reduce hazards shall be used. Countermeasures include placing utility facilities at locations which protect or minimize exposure to out-of-control vehicles, using breakaway features, using impact attenuation devices, using delineation, or shielding.

(c) *Installations within freeways*. (1) Each State transportation department shall submit an accommodation plan in accordance with §§ 645.211 and 645.215 which addresses how the State transportation department will consider applications for longitudinal utility installations within the access control lines of a freeway. This includes utility installations within interchange areas which must be constructed or serviced by direct access from the main lanes or

ramps. If a State transportation department elects to permit such use, the plan must address how the State transportation department will oversee such use consistent with this subpart, Title 23 U.S.C., and the safe and efficient use of the highways.

(2) Any accommodation plan shall assure that installations satisfy the following criteria:

(i) The effects utility installations will have on highway and traffic safety will be ascertained, since in no case shall any use be permitted which would adversely affect safety.

(ii) The direct and indirect environmental and economic effects of any loss of productive agricultural land or any productivity of any agricultural land which would result from the disapproval of the use of such right-of-way for accommodation of such utility facility will be evaluated.

(iii) These environmental and economic effects together with any interference with or impairment of the use of the highway in such right-of-way which would result from the use of such right-of-way for the accommodation of such utility facility will be considered.

(iv) [Reserved]

(v) A utility strip will be established along the outer edge of the right-of-way by locating a utility access control line between the proposed utility installation and the through roadway and ramps. Existing fences should be retained and, except along sections of freeways having frontage roads, planned fences should be located at the freeway right-of-way line. The State or political subdivision is to retain control of the utility strip right-of-way including its use by utility facilities. Service connections to adjacent properties shall not be permitted from within the utility strip.

(3) Nothing in this part shall be construed as prohibiting a transportation department from adopting a more restrictive policy than that contained herein with regard to longitudinal utility installations along freeway right-of-way and access for constructing and/or for servicing such installations.

(d) *Uniform policies and procedures.* For a transportation department to fulfill its responsibilities to control

utility use of Federal-aid highway right-of-way within the State and its political subdivisions, it must exercise or cause to be exercised, adequate regulation over such use and occupancy through the establishment and enforcement of reasonably uniform policies and procedures for utility accommodation.

(e) *Private lines.* Because there are circumstances when private lines may be allowed to cross or otherwise occupy the right-of-way of Federal-aid projects, transportation departments shall establish uniform policies for properly controlling such permitted use. When permitted, private lines must conform to the provisions of this part and the provisions of 23 CFR 1.23(c) for longitudinal installations.

(f) *Direct Federal highway projects.* On direct Federal highway projects, the FHWA will apply, or cause to be applied, utility and private line accommodation policies similar to those required on Federal-aid highway projects. When appropriate, agreements will be entered into between the FHWA and the transportation department or other government agencies to ensure adequate control and regulation of use by utilities and private lines of the right-of-way on direct Federal highway projects.

(g) *Projects where state lacks authority.* On Federal-aid highway projects where the State transportation department does not have legal authority to regulate highway use by utilities and private lines, the State transportation department must enter into formal agreements with those local officials who have such authority. The agreements must provide for a degree of protection to the highway at least equal to the protection provided by the State transportation department's utility accommodation policy approved under the provisions of § 645.215(b) of this part. The project agreement between the State transportation department and the FHWA on all such Federal-aid highway projects shall contain a special provision incorporating the formal agreements with the responsible local officials.

(h) *Scenic areas.* New utility installations, including those needed for highway purposes, such as for highway

lighting or to serve a weigh station, rest area or recreation area, are not permitted on highway right-of-way or other lands which are acquired or improved with Federal-aid or direct Federal highway funds and are located within or adjacent to areas of scenic enhancement and natural beauty. Such areas include public park and recreational lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, historic sites as described in 23 U.S.C. 138, scenic strips, overlooks, rest areas and landscaped areas. The State transportation department may permit exceptions provided the following conditions are met:

(1) New underground or aerial installations may be permitted only when they do not require extensive removal or alteration of trees or terrain features visible to the highway user or impair the aesthetic quality of the lands being traversed.

(2) Aerial installations may be permitted only when:

(i) Other locations are not available or are unusually difficult and costly, or are less desirable from the standpoint of aesthetic quality,

(ii) Placement underground is not technically feasible or is unreasonably costly, and

(iii) The proposed installation will be made at a location, and will employ suitable designs and materials, which give the greatest weight to the aesthetic qualities of the area being traversed. Suitable designs include, but are not limited to, self-supporting armless, single-pole construction with vertical configuration of conductors and cable.

(3) For new utility installations within freeways, the provisions of paragraph (c) of this section must also be satisfied.

(i) *Joint use agreements.* When the utility has a compensable interest in the land occupied by its facilities and such land is to be jointly occupied and used for highway and utility purposes, the transportation department and utility shall agree in writing as to the obligations and responsibilities of each party. Such joint-use agreements shall incorporate the conditions of occupancy for each party, including the rights vested in the transportation department and the rights and privileges

retained by the utility. In any event, the interest to be acquired by or vested in the transportation department in any portion of the right-of-way of a Federal-aid or direct Federal highway project to be vacated, used or occupied by utilities or private lines, shall be adequate for the construction, safe operation, and maintenance of the highway project.

(j) *Traffic control plan.* Whenever a utility installation, adjustment or maintenance activity will affect the movement of traffic or traffic safety, the utility shall implement a traffic control plan and utilize traffic control devices as necessary to ensure the safe and expeditious movement of traffic around the work site and the safety of the utility work force in accordance with procedures established by the transportation department. The traffic control plan and the application of traffic control devices shall conform to the standards set forth in the current edition of the "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" (MUTCD) and 23 CFR part 630, subpart J. This publication is available for inspection and copying from the FHWA Washington Headquarters and all FHWA Division Offices as prescribed in 49 CFR part 7.

(k) *Corrective measures.* When the transportation department determines that existing utility facilities are likely to be associated with injury or accident to the highway user, as indicated by accident history or safety studies, the transportation department shall initiate or cause to be initiated in consultation with the affected utilities, corrective measures to provide for a safer traffic environment. The corrective measures may include changes to utility or highway facilities and should be prioritized to maximum safety benefits in the most cost-effective manner. The scheduling of utility safety improvements should take into consideration planned utility replacement or upgrading schedules, accident potential, and the availability of resources. It is expected that the requirements of this paragraph will result in an orderly and positive process to address the identified utility hazard problems in a timely and reasonable manner with due regard to the effect of the corrective measures on both the utility consumer

and the road user. The type of corrective measures are not prescribed. Any requests received involving Federal participation in the cost of adjusting or relocating utility facilities pursuant to this paragraph shall be subject to the provisions of 23 CFR part 645, subpart A, Utility Relocations, Adjustments and Reimbursement, and 23 CFR part 924, Highway Safety Improvement Program.

(1) *Wetlands.* The installation of privately owned lines or conduits on the right-of-way of Federal-aid or direct Federal highway projects for the purpose of draining adjacent wetlands onto the highway right-of-way is considered to be inconsistent with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, dated May 24, 1977, and shall be prohibited.

(m) *Utility determination.* In determining whether a proposed installation is a utility or not, the most important consideration is how the STD views it under its own State laws and/or regulations.

[50 FR 20354, May 15, 1985, as amended at 53 FR 2833, Feb. 2, 1988; 60 FR 34851, July 5, 1995; 65 FR 70311, Nov. 22, 2000]

**§ 645.211 State transportation department accommodation policies.**

The FHWA should use the current editions of the AASHTO publications, “A Guide for Accommodating Utilities Within Highway Right-of-Way” and “Roadside Design Guide” to assist in the evaluation of adequacy of STD utility accommodation policies. These publications are available for inspection from the FHWA Washington Headquarters and all FHWA Division Offices as prescribed in 49 CFR part 7. Copies of current AASHTO publications are available for purchase from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Suite 225, 444 North Capitol Street NW., Washington, DC 20001, or electronically at <http://www.aashto.org>. At a minimum, such policies shall make adequate provisions with respect to the following:

(a) Utilities must be accommodated and maintained in a manner which will not impair the highway or adversely affect highway or traffic safety. Uniform procedures controlling the man-

ner, nature and extent of such utility use shall be established.

(b) Consideration shall be given to the effect of utility installations in regard to safety, aesthetic quality, and the costs or difficulty of highway and utility construction and maintenance.

(c) The State transportation department’s standards for regulating the use and occupancy of highway right-of-way by utilities must include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) The horizontal and vertical location requirements and clearances for the various types of utilities must be clearly stated. These must be adequate to ensure compliance with the clear roadside policies for the particular highway involved.

(2) The applicable provisions of government or industry codes required by law or regulation must be set forth or appropriately referenced, including highway design standards or other measures which the State transportation department deems necessary to provide adequate protection to the highway, its safe operation, aesthetic quality, and maintenance.

(3) Specifications for and methods of installation; requirements for preservation and restoration of highway facilities, appurtenances, and natural features and vegetation on the right-of-way; and limitations on the utility’s activities within the right-of-way including installation within areas set forth by § 645.209(h) of this part should be prescribed as necessary to protect highway interests.

(4) Measures necessary to protect traffic and its safe operation during and after installation of facilities, including control-of-access restrictions, provisions for rerouting or detouring traffic, traffic control measures to be employed, procedures for utility traffic control plans, limitations on vehicle parking and materials storage, protection of open excavations, and the like must be provided.

(5) A State transportation department may deny a utility’s request to occupy highway right-of-way based on State law, regulation, or ordinances or the State transportation department’s policy. However, in any case where the provisions of this part are to be cited as the basis for disapproving a utility’s