

**Oregon Department of Transportation**

**Guidelines for the Operation of  
Highway Advisory Radio  
and  
Travelers Advisory Radio  
on  
State Highways**

**June 2006**



**OREGON DEPARTMENT of TRANSPORTATION  
HIGHWAY DIVISION  
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Under Oregon Revised Statute 810.200, **Uniform standards for traffic control devices; uniform system of marking and signing highways**, and letters of authority from the Oregon Transportation Commission, the State Traffic Engineer is responsible for exercising authority with respect to the use of traffic control devices. Traffic control devices notify road users of regulations and provide warning and guidance required for the safe and efficient operation of the road system. Since highway advisory radio is a traffic control device, its operation is under the authority of the State Traffic Engineer. This authority relates to all aspects of HARs operated by ODOT as well as to the posting of advance signing on state highways for Travelers Advisory Radio stations operated by other agencies.

The ***Guidelines for the Operation of Highway Advisory Radio on State Highways*** were first developed by the Traffic Engineering and Operations Section in January 2002 with input from the Oregon Traffic Control Devices Committee and Region Traffic Managers. The guidelines were updated in June 2005 and 2006. Information on Travelers Advisory Radio stations operated by state and local agencies is provided in Supplement A. These guidelines are consistent with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD 2003).

Approved by the Oregon State Traffic Engineer:

(original signed by)

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Date

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## I. Introduction

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licenses state and local agencies and government-affiliated agencies, such as airport authorities, to use low-power roadside transmitters to provide motorists with up-to-the-minute travel information via their AM/FM radios. These systems, which the FCC calls Travelers Information Stations, can provide warnings, advisories, directions, or other non-commercial material of importance to motorists.

Messages, which are usually less than a minute in length, are recorded for continuous repetition. The message length is adjusted to permit the driver to receive the message at least twice while passing through the station's coverage zone.

Travelers Information Stations operated by the Oregon Department of Transportation are known as Highway Advisory Radio (HAR). The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) utilizes HARs to supplement messages provided on standard highway signs or variable message signs. HARs are permanently installed at locations where communication with travelers may be critical and are temporarily installed in some work zones to provide travelers with timely information about a construction or maintenance project. Advance signs are posted to inform motorists about the availability of a HAR.

Travelers Information Stations operated by other state agencies and local agencies are known as Travelers Advisory Radio (TAR). Agencies receiving an FCC license may post advance signs on a state highway with State Traffic Engineer approval. These signs must be installed in accordance with the guidelines given in ODOT's *Sign Policy and Guidelines for the State Highway System* (Chapter 5-12). These are included as Supplement A, Travelers Advisory Radio Signing Guidelines.

## II. Authority to Operate HARs and TARs on State Highways in Oregon

Under Oregon Revised Statute 810.200, **Uniform standards for traffic control devices; uniform system of marking and signing highways**, and letters of authority from the Oregon Transportation Commission, the State Traffic Engineer is responsible for exercising authority with respect to the use of traffic control devices. Since HARs are traffic control devices, their operation is under the authority of the State Traffic Engineer. This authority relates to all aspects of HARs operated by ODOT as well as to the posting of advance signing on state highways for Travelers Advisory Radio stations operated by other agencies.

## III. Operation of Permanent and Temporary HARs

A Traffic Operations Center employee or authorized staff from a Region Traffic or District office may operate permanent HARs.

Authorized staff from a Project Manager's office, Traffic Operations Center, Region, or District may operate a temporary HAR established for a construction or maintenance project.

The manager of the unit operating a HAR should designate a HAR operator to be responsible for the operation of the HAR.

#### **IV. HAR and TAR Review Process**

##### **A. State Traffic Engineer Approval**

**HAR** - State Traffic Engineer approval is required prior to the construction of a permanent HAR operated by ODOT and installation of advance signs.

1. The HAR operator, in consultation with the Region Traffic Manager and ITS Unit, should prepare and submit to the State Traffic Engineer a written request to apply for an FCC license and install a HAR.
2. The request should be signed by the manager of the unit that will operate the HAR and include:
  - a. the primary purpose of the HAR,
  - b. location of coverage area,
  - c. proposed transmitter locations,
  - d. proximate placement of signs,
  - e. control point (where and how the HAR is to be controlled), and
  - f. operational responsibilities.

**Temporary HAR** - State Traffic Engineer approval is not required for temporary HARs operated by ODOT. The intention to utilize a temporary HAR to provide travelers timely information about a construction project should be included in required work zone signing plans.

**TAR** - State Traffic Engineer approval is required prior to installation of advance signs for Travelers Advisory Radio stations operated by other state and local agencies. Refer to Supplement A which describes the approval process and requirements.

##### **B. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) License**

The Wireless Communications Unit, Information Systems Branch, ODOT will file a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) license application. The Wireless Communications Unit will notify the HAR operator and State Traffic Engineer when the license application is approved. The Wireless Communications Unit will maintain all licenses issued.

#### **V. Conditions Warranting Use of HAR**

The purpose of a HAR is to provide supplemental information to motorists about traffic advisories, construction and maintenance operations, adverse weather or environmental conditions, route diversions, Amber Alerts, and special events. HARs are not intended to replace permanent or temporary signs required by the MUTCD. Information may be provided about emergency situations or about routine matters.

## VI. Guidance on HAR Use

### A. Traffic Advisories

The accuracy and specificity of the information included in a broadcast is dependent upon surveillance capabilities. If accurate visual surveillance is not available, the messages should be general in nature. Credibility is adversely affected by transmitting erroneous information.

### B. Construction and Maintenance Operations

HAR serves to supplement, not replace, standard traffic control devices used in highway work zones. The traffic control devices must perform the function of warning and controlling traffic through the work zone. HAR can be used to warn of unusual situations that occur which may not be adequately handled by static traffic control devices (e.g., presence of traffic queues, requirements for diversion, etc.). If permanent or portable variable message signs are also used, careful coordination between all messages should occur to prevent driver confusion.

### C. Adverse Weather and Environmental Conditions

When adverse weather and environmental conditions are known, HAR can be used to tell drivers exactly what the conditions are and what action may be required. Refer to Section IX.D. for guidance on use of HAR for broadcasting general weather forecasts.

### D. Route Diversions

Route diversion is a special case of other applications, such as construction and maintenance, traffic advisories, and weather. Diversion routes should be pre-established. Diversion routes that include local jurisdiction routes should be pre-established with the local agency. When broadcasting specific route information:

- Keep the information simple. Unfamiliar drivers need specific instructions as to what they should do to avoid a traffic problem.
- Limit the information to no more than four street names and four turning movements.
- Use exit numbers and route numbers when possible.
- If possible, use detour signing to reinforce the HAR message and eliminate the need to broadcast detailed information that may not be retained by the driver.

Without up-to-date knowledge about the alternate route conditions, merely advise drivers to “take an alternate route”.

### E. Amber Alert

When an Amber Alert is activated, the ODOT Transportation Operations Center (TOC) shift supervisor may activate a HAR message as long as the HAR is not needed to warn motorists of conditions on the highway needing their immediate

attention. Refer to Supplement C, Amber Alert System, for specific guidance on using HAR for Amber Alert broadcasts.

#### F. Special Events

Experience has shown that drivers, particularly unfamiliar drivers, are looking for help in finding a good route to special events (e.g., ballgames, festivals, etc.). Experiments have shown that drivers are receptive to taking the alternate routes recommended by messages on HARs or special signs. In addition to routing, drivers also desire information concerning the availability of suitable convenient parking. The message shall be limited to routing and parking information and shall not include information about the event or any commercial message.

### VII. Advance Signing

Advance signs must be posted to alert motorists about the availability of a HAR or Travelers Advisory Radio station. Signs must be fabricated and installed according to standards published in ODOT's *Sign Policy and Guidelines for the State Highway System* for the specific type of installation.

#### A. Permanent HARs

State Traffic Engineer approval is required before an advance sign for a permanent HAR is installed. All signs must be equipped with flashing beacons, which shall be activated when a message is being broadcast. When no message is being broadcast or when an automated weather forecast is being broadcast, the flashing beacons should not be activated.

#### B. Temporary HARs

If advance signs for temporary HARs are equipped with flashing beacons, the beacons shall be activated when a message is being broadcast. All advance signs for temporary HARs that are not equipped with flashing beacons must be designed so that the sign can be folded, covered, or removed when a message is not being broadcast.

#### C. Travelers Advisory Radio

State Traffic Engineer approval is required before an advance sign for a Travelers Advisory Radio station operated by an agency other than ODOT is installed. See Supplement A for specific requirements.

### VIII. Message Development

HAR operators may develop messages that are suitable for broadcasting on HAR. These are messages related to traffic advisories, construction and maintenance operations, adverse weather and environmental conditions, Amber Alerts, and special events.

Examples of messages appropriate for various situations are given in Supplement B: Sample HAR Messages. Examples of messages appropriate for use for an Amber Alert are given in Supplement C. The following general guidelines should be considered:

A. Be Concise

HAR messages should contain the minimum number of words needed to convey the roadway situation. Use phrases or short sentences. The motorist should be able hear the entire message twice while within the effective transmission range.

B. Follow a Standard Format

The following format is suggested:

- An introductory statement (agency name, location of HAR, date and time)
- An attention statement (to address a certain group of motorists or destination)
- A problem statement
- A location statement
- An effect statement (lane closure, delay, chains required, etc.)
- An action statement

C. Follow FCC Requirements

The FCC license requirements must be followed. Specific requirements given in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 47, Section 90.242 (a)(7) regarding messages to be transmitted are:

“Travelers Information Stations shall transmit only non-commercial voice information pertaining to traffic and road conditions, traffic hazard and travel advisories, directions, availability of lodging, rest stops and service stations, and descriptions of local points of interest. It is not permissible to identify the commercial name of any business establishment whose service may be available within or outside the coverage area of a Travelers Information Station. However, to facilitate announcements concerning departures/arrivals and parking areas at air, train, and bus terminals, the trade name identification of carriers is permitted.” (*Travelers Information Station* is the FCC term for HARs and TARs.)

D. Identify the Agency Broadcasting the Message

Identify the agency broadcasting the HAR message and the date and time of the broadcast every repetition of the message. Inclusion of the station frequency is optional. The following standard format should be used:

“This is the Oregon Department of Transportation Highway Advisory Radio for the (location) for (date, time).”

## **IX. Message Recording and Broadcasting**

As a general rule, HAR messages are prerecorded and stored for future use. Additional messages can be recorded as needs arise.

### **A. Recording Messages**

#### **1. Announcer**

The announcer should be a person with an average to low-pitched voice. The style of delivery should sound official.

Good speaker characteristics are as follows:

- Clear enunciation without obvious dialect.
- Ability to speak loudly and at a moderately fast rate.
- Ability to modulate the pitch of the voice so as not to speak in a monotone.

#### **2. Delivery Style**

The message should be delivered in a calm, matter of fact, and dignified manner. Since the names of streets and turn directions are the information drivers will need to recall, these words should be stressed in delivery. Each syllable of a proper name should be carefully enunciated. There should be a brief (1 second) pause after each statement.

#### **3. Speed of Delivery**

The appropriate speed of delivery for radio messages is about 175 words per minute.

### **B. Testing and Verifying Messages**

1. Test all messages prior to broadcasting for accuracy, quality, length, and inclusion of necessary elements.
2. Confirm that the actual message is being broadcast as intended.

### **C. Message Consistency**

HAR messages shall not conflict with or contradict messages displayed by variable message signs (VMSs) and other traffic control devices within the broadcast area. Messages should be consistent with messages that may be provided by telephone or TripCheck.

### **D. Terminating a Message**

Update the broadcast as needed and terminate it when it is no longer needed. When terminating a message, deactivate the advance beacon on the advance warning sign. If no message is being broadcasted, the HAR operator may

broadcast the standard introductory message given in Section VIII.D. and the following statement "There is no information to communicate at this time" or may broadcast an automated weather forecast.

**X. System Monitoring**

The HAR should be tested regularly to determine that the system is still transmitting to the desired range and that message clarity is maintained.

**XI. Recordkeeping**

The HAR operator should maintain records on messages broadcast and date and time of the broadcast.

## Supplement A: Travelers Advisory Radio Signing Guidelines\*

Signing for Travelers Advisory Radio (TAR) stations operated by state and local agencies may be installed on a state highway under the following criteria:

1. TAR signing will be placed so it does not interfere with signing specified by Oregon Revised Statutes, Oregon Administrative Rules, the MUTCD, and any other applicable rules and regulations. TAR signs will be erected only when there is adequate space along the highway.
2. The requesting agency (a non-commercial agency), after receiving a FCC license, makes written application to the District Manager and is issued a permit for sign installation. The following process is established:
  - The applicant submits a copy of the FCC license and an operational plan for the proposed TAR to the District Manager. The operational plan should include the primary purpose of the TAR, broadcast boundaries, proposed location for signs, and operational and maintenance responsibilities.
  - The District Manager will review the request, determine sign locations, and request State Traffic Engineer approval.
  - The State Traffic Engineer will give written approval, authorizing the District to issue a permit that will state the expectation that the TAR will be operated as described in the operational plan.
3. Messages transmitted must be consistent with FCC regulation Title 47, Section 90.242(a)(7):

“Travelers Information Stations shall transmit only non-commercial voice information pertaining to traffic and road conditions, traffic hazards and travel advisories, directions, availability of lodging, rest stops and service stations, and descriptions of local points of interest. It is not permissible to identify the commercial name of any business establishment whose service may be available within or outside the coverage area of a Travelers Information Station. However, to facilitate announcements concerning departures/arrivals and parking areas at air, train, and bus terminals, the trade name identification of carriers is permitted.”

(*Travelers Information Stations* is the FCC term for HARs and TARs.)
4. The requesting agency will fund all sign fabrication and installation costs. Signs will be fabricated and installed to ODOT standards.
5. The District Manager, or his/her representative, will monitor broadcasts occasionally to determine compliance with FCC regulations. Should broadcasts not be in compliance with regulations, signs will be removed. Signs will be removed if the agency ceases to broadcast messages or the FCC permit is terminated.
6. All TAR transmitters shall be accessible to federal, state, or local incident response agencies to broadcast public safety or traffic management messages in the event of natural or civil emergencies. The requesting agency must agree to discontinue TAR broadcasting if there is interference with a HAR installed by ODOT for construction and maintenance purposes.

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\* Oregon Department of Transportation, *Sign Policy and Guidelines for the State Highway System*, Chapter 5-12.

## **Supplement B: Sample HAR Messages**

HARs are used to provide information to motorists about traffic advisories, construction and maintenance operations, adverse weather or environmental conditions, Amber Alerts, and special events.

Each message should be preceded with the standard introductory message “This is the Oregon Department of Transportation Highway Advisory Radio for the (location) for (date, time).” Each of these messages may include a message about a route diversion.

The following are examples:

### **Traffic Advisory**

If accurate visual surveillance is not available, the message should be general:

ATTENTION EASTBOUND INTERSTATE 84 TRAFFIC  
INCIDENT AHEAD  
EXPECT DELAYS

If visual surveillance is available, a more specific message can be broadcast:

ATTENTION EASTBOUND INTERSTATE 84 TRAFFIC  
CRASH AHEAD AT EXIT 123  
LEFT LANE CLOSED  
MOTORISTS SHOULD MERGE RIGHT

If a diversion route has been established, the route can be specifically described:

ATTENTION EASTBOUND INTERSTATE 84 TRAFFIC  
CRASH AHEAD AT EXIT 123  
LEFT LANE CLOSED  
MOTORISTS SHOULD MERGE RIGHT  
TO AVOID MAJOR DELAY  
EXIT AT FIRST PENDLETON EXIT  
THIS IS EXIT 122  
TURN RIGHT ON MAIN  
TURN LEFT ON FIRST  
TURN LEFT ON WILSON  
PROCEED BACK TO I-84

Special messages may be developed for unique situations. The following is an example:

ATTENTION WESTBOUND INTERSTATE 84 TRAFFIC  
TOXIC HAZARD AHEAD  
INTERSTATE 84 IS CLOSED AT PENDLETON  
ALL WESTBOUND TRAFFIC MUST DETOUR AT PENDLETON  
PLEASE FOLLOW DETOUR SIGNS  
I REPEAT, ALL WESTBOUND TRAFFIC MUST DETOUR AT PENDLETON

## **Construction and Maintenance Operations**

ATTENTION NORTHBOUND INTERSTATE 5 TRAFFIC  
DUE TO CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES  
INTERSTATE 5 IS CLOSED FROM MP 233 TO MP 235  
NORTHBOUND TRAFFIC SHOULD MERGE LEFT  
THERE IS 2-WAY TRAFFIC  
DO NOT PASS  
REDUCE SPEED FOR MERGE TO 45 MPH  
CONSTRUCTION SPEED ZONE IS 45 MPH  
USE CAUTION

In some cases a HAR may be used to provide advance notification of a future construction or maintenance activity:

ATTENTION TRUCKS AND OTHER OVERSIZED VEHICLES  
BRIDGE MAINTENANCE WORK WILL BEGIN  
ON MONDAY, AUGUST 20TH  
THE CLEAR CREEK BRIDGE WILL BE CLOSED TO OVERSIZED VEHICLES  
TRAFFIC WILL BE REROUTED  
MAINTENANCE WORK IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY AUGUST 31ST

## **Adverse Weather or Environmental Conditions**

ATTENTION NORTHBOUND INTERSTATE 5 TRAFFIC  
ROCK SLIDE ON INTERSTATE 5  
LEFT LANE CLOSED  
MOTORISTS SHOULD MERGE RIGHT  
REDUCE SPEED

ATTENTION ALL DRIVERS  
FOGGY CONDITIONS  
VISIBILITY IS LIMITED  
0-15 FEET  
REDUCE SPEED  
USE HEADLIGHTS

## **Special Events**

MOTORISTS TRAVELING TO THE OREGON STATE FAIR  
EXIT AT THE FIRST SALEM EXIT, EXIT 257  
TURN RIGHT AT FIRST SIGNAL AND FOLLOW SIGNS TO THE FAIRGROUNDS  
PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT ALL GATES  
EXHIBITORS WITH YELLOW PERMITS SHOULD FOLLOW SIGNS TO EITHER THE  
LIVESTOCK ENTRANCE OR MAIN EXHIBITION ENTRANCE

## **Supplement C: Amber Alert System**

The Amber Plan, established in October 2002 by Executive Order No. 02-22, uses the Emergency Alert System, television, radio, the state highway variable message system, and the state Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) system to provide timely emergency information to the public regarding a child abduction. The messages broadcast on a HAR are referred to as Amber Alert messages.

### **Operation**

1. An Amber Alert message shall only be transmitted when there is verification of a legitimate Amber Alert activation from the Oregon State Police (OSP) Northern Communications Center or the Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA) 911 Center.
2. No Amber Alert message shall be transmitted by an ODOT HAR at the request of any other law enforcement offices.
3. When an Amber Alert is active, activation of a HAR is at the discretion of the ODOT Transportation Operations (TOC) shift supervisor.
4. When a HAR is needed to warn motorists of conditions on the highway needing their immediate attention, an Amber Alert message should not be transmitted.
5. The following uses will typically have higher priority than the transmitting of an approved Amber Alert message:
  - Traffic advisories
  - Construction or maintenance operations
  - Adverse weather or environmental conditions
  - Route diversions
6. Unless the Amber Alert is updated with additional vehicle information, or reissued, it should be transmitted for no more than eight hours or until the Amber Alert is officially called off, whichever occurs first. The only exception to this guidelines shall be if the Amber Alert occurs after 8 PM, the Amber Alert will remain active until 9 AM the following morning or until the Amber Alert is officially called off, whichever occurs first.

### **Approved Amber Alert Messages**

The Amber Alert message transmitted on a HAR should be the same message being broadcast by the local radio stations. The following is a sample:

ATTENTION THE EUGENE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS INVESTIGATING A CHILD  
ABDUCTION  
SUSPECT MAY BE DRIVING A WHITE 1990 TOYOTA CELICA TWO DOOR  
LICENSE PLATE NUMBER CL49986  
DIRECTION OF TRAVEL IS UNKNOWN  
IF YOU ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION THAT MAY ASSIST WITH THIS  
INVESTIGATION  
PLEASE CALL 911 OR LOCAL POLICE  
TUNE TO YOUR LOCAL NEWS STATION FOR UPDATES