

3M Sign Grant Program Helps Municipalities Meet Federal Transportation Mandate

New grant program will help municipalities save lives and dollars by improving road sign visibility

3M Traffic Safety Systems is launching the 3M Sign Grant Program, a new program designed to significantly reduce road sign replacement costs to local and state governments to meet the latest federal retroreflectivity standards set by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to improve traffic safety. The 3M Sign Grant Program begins January 5, 2009 and will run through November 30, 2009.

Government agencies are able to apply for onetime grants to receive significant cost savings to upgrade road signs to meet and exceed the FHWA Minimum Levels of Retroreflectivity. Finalized in January 2008, the FHWA standards require state and local agencies to assess their road signs and develop a replacement plan for non-compliant signs within four years. Non-compliant warning and regulatory signs must be replaced within seven years, and guide and street name signs within 10 years.

“Our goal with the 3M Sign Grant Program is to encourage agencies to start the planning process now to meet the new standards and to begin replacing underperforming signs,” said Tom McGlynn, highway safety business director, 3M Traffic Safety Systems. “We’ll work alongside agencies to improve traffic sign brightness and visibility to help meet and exceed the elevated safety standards.”

Fatality rates are three times higher at night than during the day. To help improve traffic safety at night, the FHWA has raised the minimum reflectivity of road signs to increase sign visibility. Sign upgrade programs in Mendocino County, Calif. and Sioux City, Iowa resulted in crash reductions attributable to more visible signs. Mendocino County spent \$79,300 on sign upgrades, saving \$12.5 million to \$23.7 million in six years from crash reductions. Sioux City spent \$145,000, saving \$4.92 million from crash reductions in three years.

Road signs generally appear equally visible in daylight no matter what quality of sheeting is used to manufacture the sign. However, at night there is a notable difference, and signs made with higher performance reflective sheeting are more visible, helping to improve safety. Higher-performing prismatic sheeting helps save lives and dollars through increased visibility for drivers, as well as provides longer retroreflectivity lifespan of the signage than sheeting made with older, glass-bead technology. Signs made with higher-performing materials generally provide cost savings to the agencies over the lifespan of the signs as they require less maintenance, last longer and help decrease traffic accidents reducing costs to the public. Most importantly, the crash reductions save lives.

3M Diamond Grade DG³ Reflective Sheeting and 3M High Intensity Prismatic Reflective Sheeting will help agencies meet the new standards and provide safer roads, life cycle cost savings and environmental benefits when compared to older optical technologies, such as the engineering grade reflective sheeting.

3M Diamond Grade DG³ Reflective Sheeting is the highest grade of sheeting available and returns nearly twice the light to drivers compared to other prismatic sheeting. This breakthrough retroreflective technology delivers visibly superior performance to help improve roadway safety. Diamond Grade DG³ technology includes “full cube” construction that produces 100 percent efficient optical elements which, in finished sheeting, returns 58 percent of available light to drivers. This technology also accommodates the wide range of observation angles from different-sized vehicles and entrance angles. Diamond Grade DG³ Reflective Sheeting has a 12-year lifespan.

3M High Intensity Prismatic Reflective Sheeting also helps improve sign visibility and safety through increased levels of retroreflectivity, when compared to engineering grade reflective sheeting. It has a 10-year lifespan, while engineering grade reflective sheeting has an expected life of seven years.

Environmental benefits of the 3M Diamond Grade DG³ Reflective Sheeting and 3M High Intensity Prismatic Reflective Sheeting occur in the manufacturing process by reducing VOC emissions by 97 percent and energy consumption by 72 percent compared to standard engineering grade reflective sheeting processes.

For more information on the 3M Sign Grant Project or to apply, visit www.3MSignGrants.com.

About 3M Traffic Safety Systems

Since inventing reflective materials more than 65 years ago, 3M Traffic Safety Systems has been the worldwide leader in developing products, systems and services for the transportation safety, traffic management, vehicle registration and commercial transportation markets. For more information about 3M Traffic Safety Systems and our products, visit www.3M.com/tss.

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About 3M

A recognized leader in research and development, 3M produces thousands of innovative products for dozens of diverse markets. 3M's core strength is applying its more than 40 distinct technology platforms – often in combination – to a wide array of customer needs. With \$24 billion in sales, 3M employs 79,000 people worldwide and has operations in more than 60 countries. For more information, visit www.3M.com.

3MKirsten Shanahan, 612-392-7619LaBrechekshanahan@labreche.comorConnie Thompson, 651-733-89143M
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