

Guidance for Variable Message Signs

The North Jersey Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition (NJDVCC) is launching a campaign from October to December 2006 to increase driver awareness about the growing problem of Deer-Vehicle Crashes and provide information on when and where crashes are more likely to occur. Elements of this campaign include the distribution of information cards and bumper magnets, the creation of radio spots, use of variable message signs, and press outreach.

An important element of the campaign is the use of permanent or portable variable message signs (VMS) to display a simple deer-crash related message. The coalition is encouraging county and municipal roadway agencies and police departments to consider displaying the following message on existing VMS that they may have:

Fall is Here, Watch for Deer!

This message was chosen by the coalition for all campaign elements. It may be displayed either as one line, with a comma in between, or as two repeating lines following one another.

The following are some suggested guidelines to ensure that the message is consistent and across different jurisdictions and targeted for greatest effectiveness.

- In order to coincide with peak deer crash season and the campaign, the messages should be displayed for the months of October through December.
- Display message on roadways with a history of deer crashes. The coalition has maps showing deer crash hotspots for counties in northern and central New Jersey, which are available upon request.
- To direct driver attention proportional to risk, consider displaying message from dusk to dawn, when crashes are most likely to occur.
- The deer-related message need not supersede other messages, including important information on traffic events and conditions, but could be used when the VMS is not needed for other applications.

The North Jersey Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition is pleased to announce that the outreach brochures about deer vehicle crash avoidance are now available for distribution. Bumper magnets should also be available shortly. Over the next few months, these materials will be accompanied by radio public service announcements, press releases, and a new NJ Deer Crash Coalition webpage (www.njdeercrash.org). In addition, they will be working with NJDOT, county and local police departments, and others to promote the message, "Fall is here, watch for deer" on their Variable Message Signs when they are not needed for other uses.

This is the first public outreach effort of the Coalition, and they need your help to make it successful. October through December is the "rutting season" for deer, which means that most deer-vehicle crashes occur during this time period. Therefore, distributing this information as soon as possible will help the campaign to be most effective in reducing the frequency and severity of deer-vehicle crashes.

Feel free to forward this message to others who may be able to assist with getting the word out.

For more information contact Lois Goldman, Chair, NJ Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition, (973) 639-8413 lgoldman@njtpa.org