

U.S. Roadways Pavement Markings

Have you ever thought about how crucial it is to travel the roadway systems as part of our daily routines? Whether it is for work or personal business, people frequent the roadway systems constantly. Being a motorist is a viable part of our daily lives, yet do we realize the importance of pavement markings on the roadways we travel? Are we always aware of their meaning? Do we sometimes not even realize there are markings on the roadway? Do we simply ignore them because they don't even grab our attention anymore? I pose these questions because pavement markings shouldn't be taken for granted. These markings are intended to convey messages to motorists using the roadway, such as which side of the road to use, or alert them to specific conditions ahead. You see, these pavement markings are safety instructions meant to keep motorists and pedestrians safe. When we don't pay attention to them, or misunderstand what they mean, bad things can, and do happen. Some common pavement markings and their meanings are as follows:

- Yellow lines separate traffic flowing in opposite directions (Motorists should stay to the right of yellow lines).
 - Solid yellow line indicates passing is prohibited.
 - Dashed yellow line indicates passing is allowed (if the other lane is clear).
- White lines separate lanes for which travel is in the same direction.
 - Double white line indicates that lane changes are prohibited.
 - Single white line indicates that lane changes are discouraged.
 - Dashed white line indicates that lane changes are allowed (if safe to do so).
- Symbols are used to indicate permitted lane usage.
 - A diamond indicates a lane reserved for use by high-occupancy vehicles.
 - A bicycle indicates a lane reserved for bicyclists.
 - Arrows show required or permitted movements at intersections.
 - A row of solid triangles indicates that the motorist must yield.
- Pavement marking designs are also used to alert motorists to potentially hazardous conditions ahead.
 - A letter X with a letter R on each side indicates a highway-rail grade crossing ahead.
 - A hollow triangle indicates a yield ahead.
 - A series of progressively wider lines across a lane indicates a speed hump ahead.

This article is just a brief overview, additional information can be found online at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>. Motorists should be aware that pavement markings have an intended safety purpose. Following the intended instruction of the pavement marking will

make you a safer and more diligent motorist. However, they only work if we all observe and comply with their meaning.

References:

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Transportation Operations

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