



What is an Electronic Message Center?

An Electronic Message Center is technically a changing message center sign defined as an electronically controlled sign, message center or reader board where copy changes of a public service or commercial nature are shown on the lamp bank (i.e. time, temperature, date, news or commercial information of interest to the traveling public). The most common type of message centers currently in use is light emitting diode or LED. There are some older changing signs still in use which utilize “flip disk” technology, which at one time were the only type of electronic signs allowed in the regulated zones.

What kind information may I display?

Any information or message pertaining to your business that is located on the same property that the message board serves may be displayed.

There are many different messages of a business nature that the proprietor may wish to convey. Below are just a few examples of messages that would be allowed:

- Name of the business
- Services provided
- Current special offerings
- Sale prices for specific items
- Time, temperature, date etc
- Messages to attract attention

What kind information may I not display?

Some examples of messages which are not allowed are:

- Advertisement of a business or service that is not located on the same property as the sign.
- Another business’s special offering.
- Any other message that would cause the message center to technically be a “billboard or signboard”, which are also referred to as off-premise signs

How may the sign be operated?

The sign may display information as outlined above and messages may change intermittently.

Are there limitations on the operation of the electronic message center?

The sign may not be “flashing” or display “chasing” lights. Flashing or pulsating is changing light intensity in sudden transitory bursts faster than once per second. Chasing lights is one or more row of lights, which light up in sequence. The sign may not be moving or animated. Moving is most often a rotating or revolving sign, an animated sign is one on which an image moves around in the display area. Scrolling text is allowed.

A sign may not display words such as “danger”, “stop”, “slow” or “turn” or be positioned such that it is mistaken for a traffic control sign or signal. An electronic sign may not flood light across a public roadway or display light in such a manner that will interfere with a motorist’s vision.

Do I need a building permit?

Yes, to obtain a sign permit you need to submit three site plans which show the property lines, building footprint, location of existing and new sign(s), a depiction of the dimensions of all signs and method of attachment for wall signs. For pole signs the sign height needs to be shown along with footing information. If you have any questions about building permits please contact the building department:

Department of Building and Code Enforcement
(509) 625-6300

For sign information contact:

Planning Services Department
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