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Outdoor Advertising

Caltrans regulates the placement of outdoor advertising (ODA) displays visible from California highways. Caltrans performs regular reviews of freeways and highways identified on the National Highway System to enforce outdoor advertising requirements under the Federal Highway Beautification Act and the State's Outdoor Advertising Act.

To receive timely communication on permit and license renewals, program updates, and ensure our records are up to date, please notify us of changes to your contact information by filling out the Business Name, Address, and Contact Name Change Form ([ODA0024](#)).

Check out the latest Newsletter [May 2025 \(PDF\)](#) | [December 2024 \(PDF\)](#)

For questions or more information, please contact ODA by [email](#) or at (916) 654-6473. Messages left by email or on the public line are responded to within 24 hours.

License Information

Engaging in the business of outdoor advertising requires an Outdoor Advertising License. Download a license application and submit it to the address listed on the application.

Annual license renewals must be received or postmarked by June 30th. Customers will receive automated email notifications regarding renewal notices (60 days prior to due date). Please add "FIP_do_not_reply@dot.ca.gov" to your email contact list to ensure these updates do not go to your spam folder. If you do not receive a notification within a week of sending in your payment, please [email](#) or call (916) 654-6473 to ensure payment was received and processed. Once payments are processed, your license will automatically be emailed to you.

Resources

Business and Professions Code Sections [5300](#) | [5301](#) | [5302](#) | [5303](#) | [5484](#)

[Outdoor Advertising License Application \(PDF\)](#)

Permit Requirements

In order for an outdoor advertising display permit application to be considered for a display adjacent to an interstate or primary highway the following criterion must be met. This information is to be used as a general guideline and does not guarantee approval.

Display Location

Must be outside the right of way of any highway.
Must be outside of any stream or drainage channel.
There must be an existing business activity within 1000 feet of proposed display location on either side of the highway.
Location of property where display is to be placed must be zoned industrial or commercial.
Must have written, current property owner consent to place the display at desired location.
Must have written permission (building permit) from the local government having jurisdiction where the display is to be located.
Location may not be adjacent to a landscaped freeway.*
Location may not be adjacent to a scenic highway.**
If adjacent to a bonus segment*** of an interstate freeway, copy, size, and spacing is more restrictive.

Display

Display must be 500 feet from any other permitted display on the same side of any highway that is a freeway.
Display must be 300 feet from any other permitted display on the same side of any primary highway that is not a freeway in an unincorporated area.
Display must be 100 feet from any other permitted display on the same side of any primary highway that is not a freeway and is within the limits of an incorporated city.
Display must be 500 feet from an interchange; intersection at grade or safety roadside rest if the highway is a freeway and the location is outside the limits of an incorporated city and outside the limits of an urban area.
An electronic changeable message center display must meet the above spacing requirements and be 1000 feet from another electronic message center display.
Maximum height for the advertising display area is 25 feet in height and 60 feet in length, not to exceed an overall maximum of 1200 square feet.

*FREEWAY REQUIREMENTS: Landscaped freeway is a section of a freeway which is now, or hereafter may be, improved by the planting at least on one side of the freeway right-of-way of lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, or other ornamental vegetation which shall require reasonable maintenance.

**HIGHWAY REQUIREMENTS: Scenic highway is a section of a highway that has been officially designated and maintained scenic pursuant to Section [260](#) , [161](#) , [262](#) , and [262.5](#) of the Streets and Highways Code or as referred to in [Section 131](#) of Title 23 of United States Code.

***BONUS SEGMENT: Bonus segment is any portion of an interstate freeway which is constructed upon any part of right-of-way, the entire width of which was acquired for right-of-way subsequent to July 1, 1956, except those segments of the interstate system that traverse commercial or industrial zones within the boundaries of incorporated municipalities, as such boundaries existed on September 21, 1959, or other areas where the land use, as of September 21, 1959, was clearly established by state law as industrial or commercial.

Forms

Prior to submitting an outdoor advertising display permit application, view the *Permit Requirements* tab. For ease of submission and faster processing, permit applications and all forms can be submitted by [email](#) .

Resources

[Outdoor Advertising Display Permit Application \(PDF\)](#)

Two permit applications at the same location are needed for a V-shape (or V-type) display, but only one set of the required documents.

[Outdoor Advertising Operator's License Application \(PDF\)](#)

[Permit Transfer \(PDF\)](#)

[Permit and License Cancellation \(PDF\)](#)

[Business Name & Contact Name Change \(PDF\)](#)

[Political Sign Application \(PDF\)](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

This content is informational only. Refer to the Outdoor Advertising Act in the *Laws, Regulations, and Agreements* tab for specific statute and regulatory information. For more information, please contact ODA by [email](#) or at (916) 654-6473.

What is the difference between a license and a permit?

An outdoor advertising license is similar to a driver's license ID number that is specific to an individual. An outdoor advertising permit would be the vehicle registration and needed for each vehicle(s). Both are subject to renewal and can be sold or transferred to another party but does not affect the driver's license ID.

How do I obtain a permit?

All companies or individuals applying for a permit must first acquire an outdoor advertising license. View the *License* tab for more information.

Permits can be obtained by submitting a completed

[Outdoor Advertising Display Permit](#) application. View the *Permit Requirements* tab for more information.

How do I know if I need a license or not?

If you are in the business of outdoor advertising, you are required to obtain an outdoor advertising license. View the *License* tab for more information. (BPC [Section 5300](#))

Do I need to renew my permit each year?

Companies or individuals with six permits or less must pay within a fixed five-year cycle.

Companies or individuals with seven permits or more have the option to renew their permits on an annual basis. (CCR

[Section 2422.1](#))

What if I am unable to acquire a building permit from the proper local authority?

ODA will accept either a building permit or an action of a local agency when applying for a permit. If neither can be provided, ODA must deny the application. (CCR [Section 2422\(4\)](#))

What are the requirements to put up political signs for an election?

The [Statement of Responsibility for Political Signs](#) form must be completed and submitted to ODA. View the *Political Signs* tab for more information.

Can I replace my permitted wooden display with metal to improve the quality?

A new permit application must be submitted as this "upgrade" is considered beyond customary maintenance. (CCR [Section 2270](#))

Who do I contact to advertise my business on the blue (Food/Gas/Lodging) signs along the highway?

For more information, contact the

[Tourists Oriented Directional Signs Program](#) or the

[Specific Service \(Business Logo\) Sign Program](#) to see if your

business qualifies.

How do I get a copy of a permit?

Most documents maintained by ODA are available to the public upon request. Visit the [Public Records Center](#) to submit your request.

How do I transfer the permit?

The permittee of record must sign and submit a [Permit Transfer](#) form.

Who do I contact if I have a complaint about what is being advertised on a display?

Contact the owner or operator of the display listed on the bottom edge of the display.

Can I pay my renewal fees online?

Currently, there is not an online payment system for renewal fees. Customers will be emailed license and permit renewal invoices approximately 60 days prior to the due date. Credit card payments can either be paid by phone or mail a check to the address on the invoice. No payments will be accepted by email.

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[Highway Designations and Interactive Map](#)

[Visibility Improvement Request](#)

[Political Signs](#)

This is a reminder for a candidate or campaign worker for either office or a ballot measure about State law governing campaign signs.

[Section 5405.3 of the State Outdoor Advertising Act](#) exempts the placing of temporary political signs from normal outdoor advertising display requirements.

Temporary political signs must meet the following criteria:

1. Encourages a particular vote in a scheduled election.
2. Is placed not sooner than 90 days prior to the scheduled election and is removed within 10 days after that election.
3. Is no larger than 32 square feet.
4. Has filed a Statement of Responsibility certifying a person who will be responsible for removing the sign.

Temporary political signs shall not be placed within the right-of-way of any highway, or within 660 feet of the edge of, and visible from the right-of-way of a classified landscaped freeway. State law directs the

Department of Transportation to remove unauthorized temporary political signs and bill the responsible party for their removal.

Resources

[Statement of Responsibility \(PDF\)](#)

[Classified Landscape](#)

[Postmile Services Query Tool](#)

Relocation Agreements

The following Frequently Asked Questions are provided for the benefit of stakeholders involved in development and implementation of relocation agreements. For more information, please contact ODA by [email](#) or at (916) 654-6473.

What is relocation of a display?

Relocation of a display means a physical change of the display from the existing permitted location to another one.

What is a relocation agreement?

A relocation agreement is the legal mechanism to move a permitted off premises advertising display to another location. When a local entity must remove or significantly impact a permitted display to accommodate development in a planned manner, it must pay the display owner fair market value. As an alternative, the local entity and the display owner can agree to relocate the affected display without expending public funds.

A relocation agreement enables a local entity to continue development in a planned manner without expenditure of public funds. The development may be a "taking" to accommodate a capital project, such as a street widening, or to give effect to a local law or regulation, such as one that establishes a historic district. Either type of development would require the local entity to pay fair market value for the "taking."

Does a relocation display need a new permit?

Yes. A relocated display needs a new permit.

Which displays are eligible for upgrades to a message center during relocation?

A relocated display may be upgraded to a message center at its new location provided it otherwise complies with spacing and all other requirements of the California Outdoor Advertising Act (Act).

Can a display be upgraded to a digital display or message center in place?

Yes. The Act provides that a permitted advertising display may be converted to a message center provided the conversion or replacement would not cause a reduction in federal aid highway funds as provided in Section 131 of Title 23 of the United States Code.

If a display is relocated, will it be considered as a "relocated" display forever and be allowed to be upgraded later?

A display can be relocated or upgraded in its new location at the time of relocation. After the relocation is completed, the newly relocated/upgrade display cannot be upgraded or relocated in the future unless there is a new relocation agreement in accordance with BPC Section 5443. Also, if building permits expire, the provisions of the relocation agreement expire, or subsequent amendments to the agreement compensate the display owner fully, the display cannot be upgraded.

Can a development agreement be considered as a relocation agreement?

Yes, so long as it is established that the relocation is to allow the local entity to continue development in a planned manner without the expenditure of public funds.

Can Caltrans dictate the requirements or condition of a relocation agreement?

No. The requirements are established by the Act. The conditions (including any compensation) are negotiated by the local entity and the display owner. Local entities can enter into relocation agreements on whatever terms that are agreeable to the display owner and the local entity. Caltrans only needs to review the relocation agreement when the proposed new location of the display is in a landscaped location. This review will take place along with the review of the submitted permit application for completeness and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Can other requirements such as spacing, displace size, bonus segments, scenic segments, etc. be waived in a relocation agreement?

No, only the landscaped freeways prohibition can be waived in a relocation agreement. Pursuant to the Outdoor Advertising Control Federal-State Agreement of 1968, Caltrans cannot allow the placement of any display that violates any federal laws or regulations at 23 CFR [Section 750](#) et seq. or otherwise results in the reduction of federal funds.

Does Caltrans have to review, approve, or sign a relocation agreement between a display owner and a local entity?

No. Caltrans does not have to approve or sign a relocation agreement between a display owner and a local entity. Caltrans does not need to review the terms of the relocation agreement. However, Caltrans will review the relocation agreement as part of the display owner's application for a permit for the relocated display. Caltrans' review is solely to verify (1) the relocation is to allow the local entity to continue development in a planned manner without the expenditure of public funds; and (2) that the new location complies with the Act (other than landscaping).

If a display owner and local entity intend to relocate a lawfully permitted display, Caltrans will be available for consultation as a courtesy. Caltrans will provide feedback (including preliminary determination if requested in accordance with 4 CCR [2421](#)), only if requested by the display owner or local entity.

What is a "taking" of an outdoor advertising display?

A taking is forced or compelled removal of a legally placed display by a local entity for a public purpose such as a capital project, rezoning or another official act (such as adoption of an ordinance or resolution) and would result in the local entity paying compensation to the display owner.

What if a display is blocked from view by a public project?

If an existing permitted display is blocked by a new public project, the display owner may either enter into a relocation agreement to move the display to a new location without the expenditure of public funds or increase its height at its existing location, provided that the height increase would not cause a reduction in federal highway funds.

If a display owner has a lease agreement with a local entity to operate the display on public property and the terms of that lease agreement expire or is lawfully terminated, is the display owner entitled to a relocation pursuant to section 5412?

Termination of a lease agreement with a local entity alone does not establish the taking of a compensable property interest. Lease agreements vary widely; it is therefore advisable that lessor(s)/lessee(s) seek the advice of counsel regarding the terms of their lease.

If a lease agreement with local public entity is terminated due to a planned public project and compelled removal violates the terms of the lease, would a display owner be entitled to compensation or relocation pursuant to section 5412?

Caltrans does not adjudicate lease disputes between property owners (including public entities) and display owners. Caltrans evaluation of a proposed relocation is limited to whether (1) the relocation is to allow the local entity to continue development in a planned manner without the expenditure of public funds; and (2) the new location complies with the Act (other than landscaping).

What does "expenditure of public funds" mean?

When a local entity takes a legally permitted display due to a public project or to give effect to a local law or regulation, the display owner may be entitled to compensation for loss of property, business, and removal costs. If the local entity must compensate the display owner, there is a qualifying "expenditure of public funds."

Does a relocation agreement between a local entity and a display owner have to identify a specific public project or the local law/regulation, that results in a "taking," which requires the removal of the lawfully erected display at a cost?

No. The relocation agreement may be for any purpose.

Does a relocation agreement have to quantify/identify costs associated with said removal that would have been paid for with public funds?

The relocation agreement does not have to quantify/identify the costs associated with the removal.

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Laws Regulations and Agreements

Laws and Regulation

State Provisions

Business and Professions Code, Division 3, Chapter 2 Advertisers

[Sections 5200-5486](#) The Outdoor Advertising Act

Amendments

2018: [AB 3168](#) Outdoor advertising displays: publicly owned property (BPC Section 5272.2)

2016: [AB 1373](#) Outdoor advertising: City of Los Angeles (BPC Section 5272.2)

2016: [SB 1199](#) Advertising displays: City of Inglewood (BPC Section 5273.1)

2013: [SB 31](#) Outdoor advertising displays: arenas (BPC Section 5272)

2013: [SB 684 Outdoor advertising displays: redevelopment agency project areas](#)

2013: [SB 694 Outdoor advertising: transit stations \(BPC Section 5272.1\)](#)

2003: [AB 1449 Outdoor advertising \(BPC Section 5443\)](#)

2002: [SB 1480 Outdoor advertising \(BPC 5216, 5354, 5408.3, 5485\)](#)

California Code of Regulations: Title 4, Division 6, Chapter 1 Outdoor Advertising

[Sections 2240-2519](#)

Federal Provisions

United States Code, Title 23, Chapter 1 Federal-Aid Highways

[Section 131](#)

Code of Federal Regulations: Title 23, Chapter I Subchapter H Right-of-Way and Envir

[Part 750 - Highway Beautification](#)

[Part 751 - Junkyard Control and Acquisition](#)

Federal State Agreement

[Bonus Agreement \(PDF\)](#)

[Beautification \(Penalty\) Agreement \(PDF\)](#)

[Precedent Decisions](#)

[Related Links](#)

Statewide Campaigns

- ▶ [ADA Access](#)
- ▶ [Adopt-A-Highway](#)
- ▶ [Amber Alert](#)
- ▶ [Be Work Zone Alert](#)
- ▶ [CAL FIRE](#)
- ▶ [Cal OES: Power Outage and Fire Recovery Resources](#)
- ▶ [California Climate Investments](#)
- ▶ [California Connected](#)
- ▶ [California Transportation Plan 2050](#)

- ▶ [Clean California](#)
- ▶ [Go Safely California](#)
- ▶ [HeatReadyCA.com](#)
- ▶ [Move Over Law](#)
- ▶ [REAL ID](#)
- ▶ [Save Our Water](#)
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