

Sign Law Made Simple

Sign Codes

The sign codes provide standards for the use, quantity, construction and locations of signs throughout the county. A Permit from either the County or the City must be obtained prior to the placing of the sign. The City Sign Administration Office is 713-535-7900. The Harris County Sign Administration Office is 713-956-3000.

Every sign shall have a certificate attached to it identifying the legality of the sign.

On-Premise Signs

An on-premise sign shall mean any sign identifying or advertising the business, person, activity, goods, products or services primarily sold or offered for sale on the premises where the sign is installed and maintained when such premises are used for business purposes.

Signs in the County, on your building and property, where the business is conducted, are regulated by the Harris County Sign Department. The City of Houston Sign Department handles on-premise signs within the City limits.

Off-Premise Signs

An off-premise sign shall mean any sign that advertises a business, person, activity, goods, products or services **not** usually located on the premises where the sign is installed and maintained, or that directs persons to any location **not** on the premises. Bandit signs, signs on utility poles and billboards are usually off-premise signs

Signs NOT on your building and property are regulated by the City of Houston sign administration in the City of Houston's Planning and Development Department. These include signs both in the City and County. The City regulates the off-premise signs because the County is in the ETJ (Extra Territorial Jurisdiction) of the City of Houston.

To place a sign on property upon which your business is not located requires both the permission of the land owner and a permit from The City of Houston. These must both be received prior to the erection of the sign.

As of May 31st 1985, Section 4612(a) of the City of Houston Building Code PROHIBITS the issuing of a construction permit of any new off-premise sign. This means no new off-premise signs in Harris County!

Signs in Public Right of Way

Signs in the public right-of-way along roads and streets are NOT allowed per State, City and County laws. The only exceptions are those signs erected, or authorized, by a governmental agency. If you place or commission to place a sign on a public right-of-way, then you may be subject to fines of \$500 to \$1,000 per occurrence per day.

The Right of Way is that space from one utility pole/telephone pole across the street to the utility pole on the opposite side of the street. If you see a sign in the right of way, contact your local Constables office, 281-376-3472.

The above are general informational statements only. It is not a complete description of the law nor is to be relied upon in the conduct of your business. Always check with the proper authorities before proceeding with the placement of any signage. This information was provided in the interest of improving the scenic environment of Harris County by the Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce.