

Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons Update VERSION 4

4/10/2018

Good News! The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued a new interim approval (IA-21) of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) effective March 20, 2018 for all new installations of RRFB devices.

https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/interim_approval/ia21/index.htm

Several patents had been issued for the RRFB devices and those patents have now been abandoned. More information is available on the FHWA Frequently Asked Questions webpage:

https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/interim_approval/ia21/faq/index.htm

Impacts

According to the Interim Approval Memorandum issued by the FHWA, "State and local agencies must request and receive permission to use this new Interim Approval, designated IA-21, from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in accordance with the provisions of Section 1A.10 of the MUTCD before they can use the RRFB, even if prior approval had been given for Interim Approval 11 (IA-11), now terminated. The issuance of this new Interim Approval does not reinstate IA-11 either in whole or in part." **MnDOT was granted blanket interim approval for all jurisdictions in Minnesota on April 5, 2018.** Local agencies do not need to apply for interim approval to use RRFBs, as blanket interim approval will cover all agencies in the state.

The new Interim Approval, IA-21, contains revised provisions that incorporate previous relevant official interpretations and that reflect more recent research and experience with the device that agencies must agree to and comply with if they wish to install RRFBs.

https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/interim_approval/ia21/index.htm

RRFB devices have been installed in many locations in Minnesota. Existing RRFBs that were installed under the terms and conditions of IA-11 may remain in operation until they reach the end of their useful service life. Existing RRFBs should be reprogrammed to the new flash pattern specified in IA-21 as part of a systematic upgrading process, such as when maintenance is performed or when signs are replaced.

More guidance on when to use RRFBs and other marked crosswalk enhancements can be found in Chapter 13 of the MnDOT Traffic Engineering Manual:

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/trafficeng/publ/tem/2015/chapter13.pdf>