



TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION FACT SHEETS

“WON’T A ‘CHILDREN AT PLAY’ SIGN HELP PROTECT OUR KIDS?”

At first consideration, it might seem that this sign would provide protection for youngsters playing in a neighborhood. It doesn't.

Studies conducted in cities where such signs were widely posted in residential areas show no evidence of having reduced pedestrian crashes, vehicles' speeds or legal liability. In fact, many types of signs which were installed to warn of normal conditions in residential areas failed to achieve the desired safety benefits. Further, if signs encourage parents to believe that children have an added degree of protection - which the signs do not and cannot provide – a great disservice results.

Obviously, children should not be encouraged to play in the roadway. The “Children at Play” sign is a direct and open suggestion that it is acceptable to do so. Technically, it is illegal for children to play in the street.

Federal standards discourage the use of “Children at Play” signs. The Michigan Vehicle Code prohibits the installation of any sign that is not specified in the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. To be effective, traffic controls should meet five basic requirements:

- 1) Fulfill a need,
- 2) Command Attention,
- 3) Convey a clear, simple meaning,
- 4) Command the respect of road users, and
- 5) Give adequate time for proper response.

“Children at Play” signs do not fulfill a need, because children should not be playing in the street, and do not convey a clear, simple message, other than implying to the children that it is acceptable to play in the street.

Specific warnings for schools, playgrounds, parks and other recreational facilities where persons are gathered and may be vulnerable are listed in the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and available for use where clearly justified.