



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

---

Vegetation Management at Outdoor Advertising

# Before You Begin

---

02-04-2015

## What is Vegetation Management At Outdoor Advertising Signs?

*A program that allows vegetation removal on state right of way to create a Viewing Zone. This Viewing Zone is an area measured 500' (maximum) parallel to the right of way in the direction from which the sign face is viewed.*

## Does Your Sign Qualify for a Permit?

Vegetation Management (VM) is allowed for legally erected conforming and non-conforming outdoor advertising signs that were permitted or assigned a working number through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) prior to December 31, 2010. All other GDOT permitted signs qualify once they have been permitted for a period of five (5) years or more.

If your sign exceeds seventy-five (75) feet in height, as measured from the base of the sign or crown of the adjacent roadway to which the sign is permitted, whichever is higher, the sign owner has to agree to reduce the height of the sign to seventy-five (75) feet or lower within sixty (60) days of the vegetation management activity. Please become familiar with the GDOT Vegetation Management Policy prior to submitting an application. Check on the GDOT web site for any permitting updates.

Your Vegetation Management Permit Application must be complete in order to be accepted for review. Take the time to resolve any issues *before* submitting any non-refundable fees. Applications will not be approved for:

- ⊗ Incomplete Applications
- ⊗ Signs with overdue renewal fees and tags missing from the structures
- ⊗ Outdoor Advertising Signs permitted through the GDOT for less than five (5) years unless they were permitted or had a working number prior to December 31, 2010
- ⊗ Outdoor Advertising Signs with no existing trees screening the Sign face
- ⊗ Applicants with pending violations or outstanding issues with any of their signs along state right of way
- ⊗ Work proposed in medians and islands
- ⊗ Work proposed within an interchange area except along the outside shoulders of the outermost ramps and parallel to a state right of way
- ⊗ Work proposed in areas that have been planted, are planned for planting, or are in the process of being planted as part of a beautification project, Encroachment Permit, or other GDOT agreement
- ⊗ Sign permits that are in the process of being transferred
- ⊗ Signs which exceed seventy-five (75) feet in height, as measured from the base of the sign or crown of the adjacent roadway to which the sign is permitted, whichever is higher, unless the sign owner agrees to reduce the height of the sign.

Vegetation Management Permits are not available for on-premise signs. They are not available for “daylighting” businesses. Applications for vegetation management may only be submitted by the outdoor advertising structure permit holder.

## Where Can You Find the Policy, Application and Other Guidelines?



Contact your State Outdoor Advertising Office for a Policy and Application Package or download the forms you need online. You can find links to these documents at:

<http://www.dot.ga.gov/doingbusiness/permits/vegetation/Pages/default.aspx>

There you can find links to:

- The Law (O.C.G.A. sections 32-6-75.1—32-6-75.3)
- The Rules (Chapter 672-14)
- The GDOT Policy for Vegetation Management at Outdoor Advertising Signs
- The Application
- MPO's (Metropolitan Planning Organizations)
- The Federal Highway Administration Temporary Traffic Control Manual (MUTCD)
- Sources for traffic control signs and devices
- A list of Registered Foresters and Certified Arborists in Georgia
- A list of Licensed Pesticide Applicators with Category 27 training
- The Legal Services Division (Laws, Rules, and Administrative Hearing Process for Outdoor Advertising)
- Erosion and Sedimentation Control Certification
- The Manual for Erosion and Sedimentation Control in Georgia

## What does a Viewing Zone look like?

To have a better understanding of what a Viewing Zone might resemble, look at the example plans in Appendices A-1, A-2, A-3, and A-4, in the Application for Vegetation Management. They show typical Sign configurations and their Viewing Zones.

## The Vegetation Management Package

The Vegetation Management permit is called FORM # 0402. It is an application that includes attachments. The entire application, including attachments must be completed before you can submit your application package. A separate permit is required for each Viewing Zone requested. In the case where a sign has two sides, as in V-type signs, each side is considered a separate Viewing Zone.



Forty-eight hours prior to any site visits, notify your local GDOT Area Office (see Page 8) so they will be aware of your planned activities on the right of way.

## The Attachments



- ✓ **Attachment #1** is time/date stamped, **color photographs** of the entire Viewing Zone [minimum of six (6) photos with different vantage points, including one photograph of the existing permit tag] taken within six (6) weeks of the application date.
- ✓ **Attachment #2** is the **Viewing Zone Inventory Sheet** used to collect data for the other attachments. A step-by-step instruction page is included for the Inventory Sheet. It must be completed and signed by a Certified Arborist or Registered Forester in the State of Georgia.
- ✓ **Attachment #3** is a copy of the **Arborist's/Forester's certification**.
- ✓ **Attachment #4** is a copy of the **Pesticide Applicator's certification in Category 27 (right of way)**. Herbicides may be used for stump treatment applications only. Herbicide treatments are allowed for eradication of invasive exotics like Kudzu, Privet, and Mimosa.
- ✓ **Attachment #5** is the **Summary of Tree Values Worksheet**. It provides a method for quantifying the Contribution Fee required as a result of tree removal from public land.

MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organizations) Counties, i.e. Counties inside MPO's, have highly urban areas within them. These MPO Counties are considered when determining the value of the trees proposed for removal. MPO Counties are highlighted on page 8 of this guide.

Vegetation management pruning is based on ANSI A300 Part 1 pruning standards and is restricted to certain techniques defined in the GDOT Vegetation Management Policy.

A non-hardwood is a conifer, such as Pine, Cypress, Spruce, Hemlock, or Cedar. Hardwoods are trees usually with deciduous leaves, including examples such as Maple, Oak, Cherry, Plum, Hickory, Ash, Beech, Willow, Poplar, and Sweetgum, with notable evergreen exceptions such as Magnolia and Live Oak.

- ✓ **Attachment #6** is the **Work Proposal**. The Work Proposal is a comprehensive description of the proposed activity within the Target View Zone. This proposal includes four parts: Part 1: The Work Activity Plan, Part 2: The Environmental Impact Checklist, Part 3: The Erosion and Sedimentation Sketch and, Part 4: The approved NOI for land disturbance of one (1) acre or more (if applicable).
- ✓ **Attachment #7** is the **Certification of Sign Height** that is completed and signed by a Professional Engineer or Professional Land Surveyor. Attachment #8 also has a Local Government Certification for Restrictions on lowering a sign that is only applicable if your sign is taller than seventy-five (75) feet and a local law, ordinance, or regulation does not allow you to lower the sign to seventy-five (75) feet or lower.
- ✓ **Attachment #8** is a copy of a **Credit Voucher** for sign removal, if applicable. A credit voucher may be used to offset the cost of the contributory fee established in Attachment 5.
- ✓ **A copy of a W-9 Form** is required with each application if you do not have an assigned Customer ID #. The name on the W-9 Form has to match the name on the application.

## FEES

**SEE APPENDIX C**  
of the Vegetation  
Management Policy  
for a detailed  
description of fees.



You are required to submit all fee payments in the form of **certified checks, money orders or company checks**. When you submit your initial application, it must include a **\$400 administrative, non-refundable fee**. The GDOT will review your application for completeness and to ensure it complies with GDOT policies. If a permit is rejected, the applicant will be notified as to why. If your permit is provisionally accepted, the GDOT will return your Form # 0402 package to you, with any changes noted, for your final signature.

### ***Study the form carefully before signing!***

Upon your final signature, return the original, signed application package to the State Outdoor Advertising Office. Include your **contribution fee check, performance bond, and insurance requirements**. Any **contribution fee** paid by you is non-refundable and cannot be reduced or returned once you submit it.

Once the GDOT receives your application with final signature and attachments, you will be provided with the GDOT Area Permit Inspector's name and information you need to proceed. You may then call your Area Permit Inspector and schedule a pre-construction meeting. You and your designated foreman are required to be present for the field review.

## RENEWALS

Renewals are due by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following the year of the Effective Date of the permit. GDOT will send you a renewal work plan form and an annual renewal invoice for \$50 each year. At least fourteen (14) days before you plan to do maintenance activity for your renewal site, submit a signed renewal work plan form to the State Outdoor Advertising Office so they can have an updated placard sent to the Area Permit Inspector. Pick up the placard at the Area Office at least forty-eight (48) hours before starting your work on the right of way. Renewing your Vegetation Management permit each year allows you to re-visit the site and maintain only the area of the viewing zone initially modified. You may remove only vegetation less than 4 inches in diameter. Vista Pruning activities for trees that are overhanging into the Target View Zone may occur. Please note that your only opportunity to remove vegetation greater than or equal to 4 inches in diameter in a Target View Zone is during the initial permit.

## HARDWOOD TREES IN EXCESS OF 75 YEARS OF AGE

Within the Target View Zone: When the Certified Arborist or Registered Forester determines a hardwood tree is in excess of 75 years of age, the tree cannot be removed. The tree may be pruned as per policy.

## EROSION CONTROL

Vegetation Management Permits are a construction/land disturbing activity. All land-disturbing activities less than an acre must follow the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act, which requires Best Management Practices (BMPs) in accordance with the Manual for Erosion and Sedimentation in Georgia "Green Book". A land disturbing activity, which is equal to or greater than one (1) acre, requires coverage under the State's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. Applicants desiring coverage under the general NPDES Permit must submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) or the Local Governing Authority in order to receive authority to discharge storm water from the construction site.

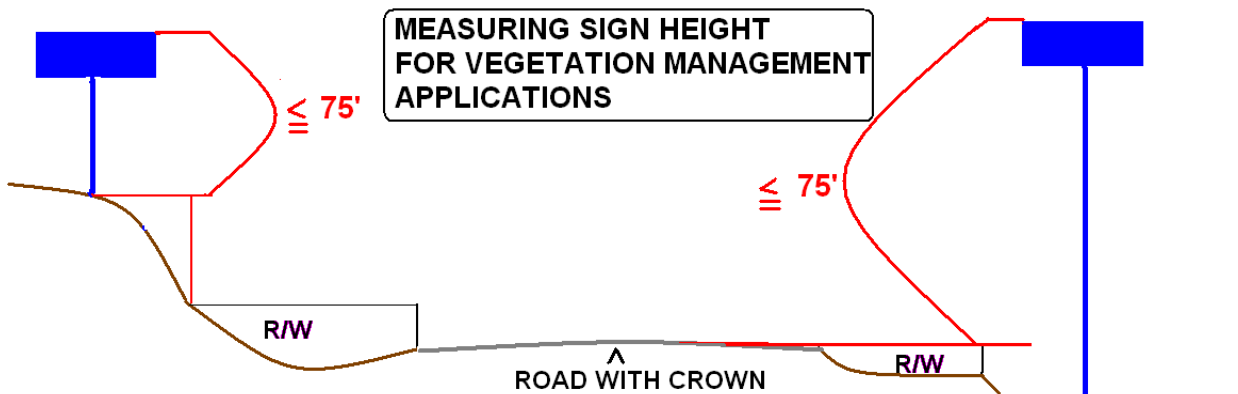
## TRAFFIC CONTROL

*ANY access to GDOT right of way for vegetation management purposes requires advance notification.*

When working on your site within the right of way, you must comply with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, current edition, or use the traffic control plan shown in Appendix D of the Permit Application. After discussing safety procedures, you may be asked to submit a traffic control plan.

Any signs must be of rigid, one-piece construction covered with suitable sheeting and legend (engineering grade). Roll-up type signs may be used if they meet MUTCD Standards. Equip all signs with flags.

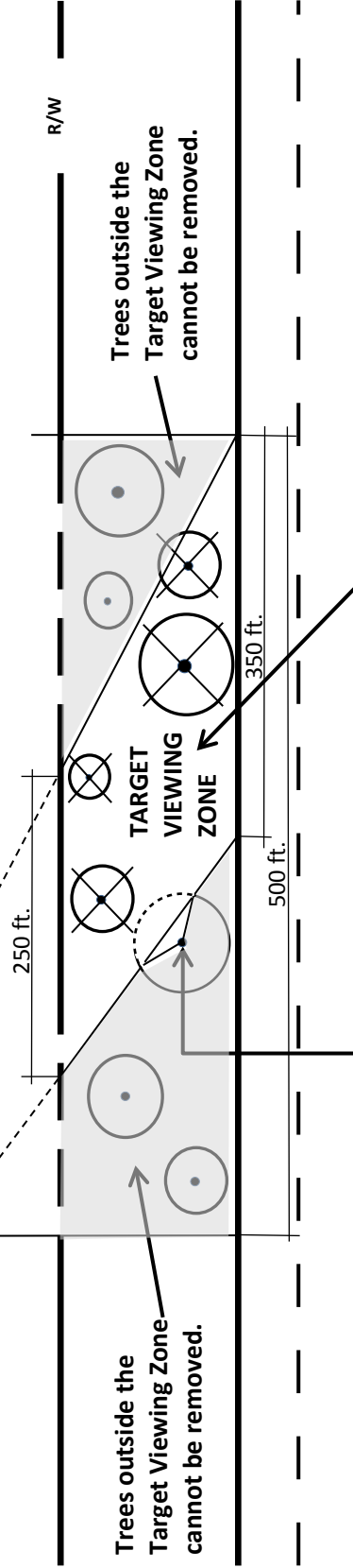
Access to the site shall only be from the edge of travel way.



In order to obtain a vegetation maintenance permit for signs which exceed 75 feet in height, as measured from the base of the sign or crown of the adjacent roadway to which the sign is permitted, whichever is higher, the owner of the sign shall agree to reduce the sign to 75 feet in height or less, as measured from the base of the sign or crown of the adjacent roadway to which the sign is permitted, whichever is higher, unless lowering is precluded by government code or regulation.

**OUTDOOR  
ADVERTISING  
SIGN**

**STIPULATIONS ON TREE  
REMOVAL AND PRUNING**



R/W

Trees outside the  
Target Viewing Zone  
cannot be removed.

TARGET  
VIEWING  
ZONE

Trees outside the  
Target Viewing Zone  
cannot be removed.

Limbs that overhang into  
the Target Viewing Zone  
may be pruned back to  
the trunk of the tree  
outside the Target  
Viewing Zone.

Trees within the Target Viewing  
Zone may be removed.\*

\* Reference Statute 32-6-75.3(e)(3) for  
vegetation that cannot be removed.



**GDOT AREA OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION (MPO Counties are highlighted)**

**District 1**

Area 1 (Dawson, <b>Forsyth</b> , <b>Gwinnett</b> , and <b>Hall</b> County) .....	770-535-5759
Area 2 ( <b>Barrow</b> , <b>Clarke</b> , Jackson, <b>Oconee</b> , and <b>Walton</b> County)	706-583-2644
Area 3 (Banks, Elbert, Franklin, Hart, <b>Madison</b> , and Stephens Co.)	706-384-7269
Area 4 (Habersham, Lumpkin, Rabun, Towns, Union, & White Co.)	706-348-4848

**District 2**

Area 1 (Glascocock, Hancock, Johnson, and Washington County)	478-240-3061
Area 2 (Emanuel, Jenkins, and Screven County) .....	478-289-2614
Area 3 (Burke, Jefferson, McDuffie, and Warren County) .....	478-625-3681
Area 4 ( <b>Columbia</b> , Lincoln, <b>Richmond</b> , and Wilkes County)	706-855-3466
Area 5 (Greene, Morgan, <b>Newton</b> , Oglethorpe, Taliaferro Co.)...	706-343-5836
Area 6 (Baldwin, Jasper, Putnam, and Wilkinson County) ....	478-445-5130
Area 7 (Bleckley, Dodge, Laurens, and Treutlen County) .....	478-275-6596

**District 3**

Area 1 (Butts, <b>Henry</b> , Lamar, Pike, <b>Spalding</b> , Taylor, & Upson Co.)	706-646-6100
Area 2 ( <b>Chattahoochee</b> , Harris, Marion, <b>Muscogee</b> , Stewart, and Webster Co.)	706-568-2165
Area 3 (Dooley, <b>Houston</b> , Macon, Pulaski, Schley, & Sumter Co.)	478-988-7151
Area 4 ( <b>Bibb</b> , Crawford, <b>Jones</b> , Monroe, <b>Peach</b> , and Twiggs Co.)	478-757-2601
Area 5 (Coweta, <b>Fayette</b> , Heard, Meriwether, Talbot, & Troup Co.)	706-845-4115

**District 4**

Area 1 (Atkinson, <b>Berrien</b> , Echols, <b>Lanier</b> , and <b>Lowndes</b> County)	229-333-5287
Area 2 (Ben Hill, Coffee, Irwin, Turner, and Wilcox County)..	912-389-4201
Area 3 (Dissolved)	
Area 4 (Brooks, Colquitt, Cook, Thomas, and Tift County)....	229-891-7130
Area 5 (Baker, <b>Dougherty</b> , <b>Lee</b> , Mitchell, and Worth County)	229-430-4198
Area 6 (Calhoun, Clay, Early, Quitman, Randolph, and Terrell Co.)	229-732-3066
Area 7 (Decatur, Grady, Miller, and Seminole County) .....	229-524-5760

**District 5**

Area 1 (Appling, Jeff Davis, Montgomery, Telfair, & Wheeler Co., Tattnall, and Toombs)	912-366-1090
Area 2 (Charlton, Bacon, Brantley, Pierce, Clinch, ....., And Ware County)	912-285-6009
Area 3 (Camden, <b>Glynn</b> , <b>Long</b> , McIntosh, and Wayne County)	912-264-7247
Area 4 (Bulloch, Candler, Effingham, Evans, and Screven Co.)	912-871-1103
Area 5 (Bryan and <b>Chatham</b> , and <b>Liberty</b> County).....	912-651-2144

**District 6**

Area 1 ( <b>Bartow</b> , <b>Cherokee</b> , and Gordon County).....	770-387-3680
Area 2 (Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens County) .....	706-635-5551
Area 3 ( <b>Catoosa</b> , <b>Dade</b> , Murray, <b>Walker</b> , and <b>Whitfield</b> Co.)	706-272-2211
Area 4 (Chattooga, <b>Floyd</b> , and Polk County) .....	706-295-6025
Area 5 (Carroll, Haralson, and <b>Paulding</b> County) .....	770-646-5522

**District 7**

Area 1 ( <b>DeKalb</b> County, <b>Rockdale</b> County, and <b>Atlanta</b> ) .....	770-986-1360
Area 2 ( <b>Cobb</b> and North <b>Fulton</b> County) .....	770-528-3238
Area 3 ( <b>Clayton</b> , <b>Douglas</b> , and South <b>Fulton</b> County).....	404-559-6699

\*\*Always contact your Area Office to notify the GDOT of your plans to be on the right of way.