

Road Sleuth

Myths & Facts Revealed



Myth: “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs make drivers more alert and drive more slowly.

Residents often request “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs be erected as they think these signs encourage drivers to slow down and be more alert while driving through residential neighborhoods. Parents requesting these signs are often passionate about their request, as they want to do everything possible to help keep their children safe. Elected officials often feel the pressure from the citizens they serve, and in turn, pressure the public works agency to put up the requested signs. After all, what harm can come from putting up a sign?

The facts are:

- Studies have shown that “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs do not reduce traffic speeds or make drivers more observant.
- “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs may give parents a false sense of security about letting their children play in or near roadways.
- Once “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs are erected, they are rarely taken down. How often have you seen an old, rusted sign and thought to yourself, surely those kids moved away a long time ago?

It is also important to note that the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), which presents traffic control device standards and guidelines, has been adopted by the State of West Virginia as law. It is the source of information on when and where a sign should be installed and which sign it should be. The MUTCD does not include “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs or any variation. Additionally, nearly 30 percent of tort cases filed against roadway agencies pertain to signs. When you install signs not in conformance with the MUTCD, you are increasing your agency’s liability risk.

It isn’t always easy to say no to residents of your community, but by not erecting “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs, you may actually be making the community safer for everyone.