

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #22

How are light poles located in rural areas?

Residents in rural areas sometimes wonder why there are so few streetlights and why the light poles aren't closer to the road. In some cases roadway lighting may help reduce the number of nighttime crashes, but light poles can also become hazards themselves if not designed and installed properly. Many factors go into determining whether additional lights should be added and how far they should be from the road.

More activity, more lights

There are usually more streetlights in urban areas than in rural areas. Some of the reasons for this are that urban areas have more pedestrians and traffic, and a higher concentration of homes and driveways. Urban areas also have more intersections, and intersections are where many nighttime crashes occur.

The cost of installing continuous lighting on every rural road is prohibitive. However, it may be useful for there to be lighting at some of the more significant rural intersections.

Light poles cannot be in the "clear zone"

Light poles with non-breakaway supports cannot be located close to rural roads because the roads are required to have a "clear zone," an unobstructed, relatively flat area beyond the edge of the traveled way where vehicles that run off the road can recover. For safety reasons, it is preferable not to have trees, non-breakaway signs, and poles in this area.

For more information

For more information, please contact _____.