Traffic Control Devices (TCD) such as traffic signals, STOP signs and speed limit signs are installed to regulate traffic flow and improve safety. The installation of the TCD should be based on the professional judgment of Traffic Engineers after careful study of the location to be controlled. The study will consider such factors as accident frequency and type, vehicle speeds, traffic volumes and roadway environment.

On occasion, an angry or persistent person influences the installation of a TCD in a manner not consistent with the recommendation of the Traffic Engineer. Many people do not realize that there are both legal and safety issues at risk when such a situation occurs.

The Manual On Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) gives Traffic Engineers the uniform standards necessary to safely assist motorists as they travel. It defines a series of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Signals, Signs, and Pavement Markings) which are clear in their messages as applied on all the nation's roadways. Use of this manual is mandated through Federal and State law. A Traffic Engineer who knowingly disobeys the MUTCD can place his or her professional license in jeopardy, increase the liability risk to the government agency, and decrease driver safety.

The March 1990 issue of "Public Roads" magazine, published by the U.S. Department of Transportation, contained an article titled, "Motorist Compliance with standard Traffic Control Devices". These behavioral studies collected compliance and other data at a large number of typical sites over extended periods of time. In the process, hundreds of thousands of motorists were observed. These observations found the following forms of motorist noncompliance:

Speeding; Not coming to full stop at STOP signs; Failing to yield right of way to pedestrians; Ignoring active railroad crossing devices; Making illegal turns; Using lanes improperly; Violating traffic signal indications; Driving too fast through work zones; Encroaching on centerlines; Violating passing zone restrictions.

The clear conclusion was that motorist noncompliance does take place. One of the recommendations in this U.S. DOT article was," To ensure that the motoring public maintains a healthy respect for TCD, traffic professionals must use them prudently. Through concerted efforts of the nature outlined above (Engineering, Enforcement and Education), the safety and efficiency of our streets and highways can be maximized." Another recommendation was to, "Apply TCD consistently to ensure they command respect."

For the safety of all users of our roadways (drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians) it is important that all Traffic Control Devices are used properly.