



Photos From the Road

My Not So Relaxing Vacation

By Emily Wilder, Kansas LTAP

Imagine this: the warm sun on your face, ocean breeze in your hair, a drink in hand, and the relaxing sound of waves hitting the shore. Sound like bliss? Well, I'll be honest with you...that part was pretty wonderful. The drive to the beach? Not so much.

This picture was taken during my trip to Puerto Rico this past summer. Now, I know what you're thinking – "It's Puerto Rico, are they even bound by the MUTCD?" Yes! Puerto Rico has adopted the national MUTCD along with a State supplement. With that being said, run down, worn out signs were pretty common, if

there was even a sign at all! I've got a video of a 5-way intersection without a single traffic sign or light, but that's a different story.

For this sign, you can tell from the octagonal shape that this is the pale ghost of a STOP sign. The bold letters and bright red that we're used to seeing have long since vanished. Also note the size, it's much smaller than the standard STOP signs we see in the US. So far, there are two main differences from the traditional STOP sign – Color and Size. According to the national MUTCD, "with the exception of symbols and colors, minor modifications in the specific design elements of a device may be made provided the essential appearance characteristics are preserved." (1) That tells us that the sign size may be compliant, but certainly not the color!

So here's a dilapidated STOP sign that is essentially a stationary off-roadway hazard. What should they do? Well, Section 1A.05 of the MUTCD covers the Maintenance of Traffic Control Devices and states, "Physical maintenance of traffic control devices should be performed to retain the legibility and visibility of the device, and to retain the proper functioning of the device." (1) I think the ship has sailed on maintenance. It is currently serving no purpose and either needs to be repaired. New sheeting on top of the metal would return this sign to good as new.

To cut them some slack, Puerto Rico has had a rough time the past few years. The island was hit hard in 2017 by Hurricane Maria, a category 5 hurricane, and funding has been tight. While the island is doing a great job of rebuilding, there were still signs of leftover damage from the storm. So, we can't fault them too much for this STOP sign. However, it should serve as a reminder to take the time and inventory your signs. I know a lot of counties in Kansas this year have been hit hard by flooding and it can be easy for

these smaller tasks to be forgotten. However, these seemingly small tasks are still important! Think about liability. Plus, maybe a tourist will be driving around Kansas and snap one of these pictures to share back home.

Hopefully, the above picture hasn't scared you away from visiting Puerto Rico. It's a beautiful island with mountains, rainforest, beaches, great food, and a thriving culture. The people are wonderful and I loved the experience! But if you do go, which I'd highly recommend, you might want to opt for the extra collision insurance on your rental car.

Do you have an interesting traffic control situation you would like us to interpret? Send it to us at kutc_training@ku.edu. We might include it in a future edition of our Kansas *LTAP Newsletter*.

Resource:

(1) Federal Highway Administration, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, 2009.
<https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009r1r2/part2a.pdf>, Accessed October 3, 2019.

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