

CONTROVERSIES IN TSE

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ISSUE: Signaling in Roundabouts: Yes or No?

According to research done in 2005 by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safetyⁱ, roundabouts can provide many benefits over conventional intersections.

- They improve traffic flow almost eliminating stop and go delays
- They eliminate left turns and their ensuing delays and head-on collisions
- They eliminate all crashes by 40% and injury crashes by 80%
- They reduce fuel consumption by about 16 percent
- They eliminate the expense of installing and maintaining traffic signals

Unfortunately, this roundabout study does not address the issue of signaling. Neither does the AAA Foundation's website on roundabouts. They all emphasize:

- Slow down to 15 or 20 mph
- Traffic coming into the circle shall yield to traffic already in the circle

But nowhere do they mention signaling as a required function for maneuvering roundabouts. Therefore, some would say that signaling at a roundabout is not required. But further investigation reveals information inconsistent with this assumption. For instance, in the UK, where the first roundabout was built in 1903 (Wikipedia), a look at roundabout rules emphasizes use of your mirrors and **signaling your intentions** and "time your signals so as not to confuse other road users."ⁱⁱ

The American Driver's Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) recommends that you **signal right preceding your exit.**ⁱⁱⁱ

Moving a little closer to home, Oregon State Law 811.400 says that "Failure to use appropriate signal for turn, lane change, stop or **exit from a roundabout**" is subject to penalty.^{iv} Like Oregon, the Idaho Driver's Manual also instructs drivers to **signal when exiting a roundabout.**^v

Finally, in Washington State, the DOT instructs drivers to **signal when exiting a roundabout but, there is no state RCW instructing to do so.** In different counties of our state, the laws are a little different. Kitsap County instructs drivers to "signal on approach and when exiting."^{vii}

So, do we signal in roundabouts and if so, when do we signal?

From the information above, I conclude that **it is correct and “Best Practice” that we instruct our students to signal when exiting a roundabout**, but that **it isn’t necessary to signal going into the roundabout**; although, if a driver did signal his intentions going into the roundabout, it would not, likely, cause any problems or confusion partially due to the low speed at entry. And, further, it would not be against Washington State RCW’s or WAC’s.

ⁱ **Continued Reliance on Traffic Signals: The Cost of Missed Opportunities to Improve Traffic Flow and Safety at Urban Intersections**; Casey Bergh* Richard A. Retting Edward Myers*; September 2005; *Kittelson & Associates, Inc. Baltimore, MD; <http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/roundabouts.html>

ⁱⁱ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/DG_070338

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.adtsea.org/wisconsin/dotdmvinfo.htm>

^{iv} <http://www.oregonlaws.org/ors/811.400>

^v http://itd.idaho.gov/dmv/driverservices/documents/driver_manual.pdf

^{vi} <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/safety/roundabouts/>

^{vii} <http://www.kitsapgov.com/pw/roundabout.htm>