Wasn’t there some type of announcement from FHWA in May of 2012 regarding traffic sign retroreflectivity?
Yes. On May 14, 2012, the Federal Highway Administration published two final rules in the Federal Register (Vol. 77, No. 93) relating to the national Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The effective date for both was June 13, 2012. These final rules establish Revisions 1 and 2 of the 2009 MUTCD, which is the basis for the uniform traffic control standards currently being used nationwide. The purpose of the second final rule from FHWA was to revise some of the previously-published compliance dates for traffic control devices, including those relating to traffic sign retroreflectivity.

How can I get a copy of these final rules, as published in the Federal Register?
As of June 2017, they were still available online through FHWA's MUTCD website: http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/

Are the national requirements for maintaining sign retroreflectivity still in effect?
Yes. The traffic sign retroreflectivity maintenance requirements are here to stay, per the national MUTCD and the Ohio MUTCD (Section 2A.08). These requirements apply to all roads open to public travel in the United States.

What changed regarding compliance dates?
The changes to FHWA’s target compliance dates for traffic sign retroreflectivity are summarized in the table on page 2 of this Technical Update. The final rule also included changes to a number of other compliance dates for traffic control devices. Please refer to the Federal Register source document or the MUTCD website for details.
Target Compliance Dates Established by the FHWA (See MUTCD Table I-2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 MUTCD Section Number</th>
<th>2009 MUTCD Section Title</th>
<th>Specific Provision</th>
<th>Compliance Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2A.08</td>
<td>Maintaining Minimum Retroreflectivity</td>
<td>Implementation and continued use of an assessment or management method that is designed to maintain traffic sign retroreflectivity at or above the established minimum levels</td>
<td>January 22, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A.08</td>
<td>Maintaining Minimum Retroreflectivity</td>
<td>Replacement of regulatory, warning, and post-mounted guide (except street name) signs that are identified using the assessment or management method as failing to meet the established minimum levels</td>
<td>January 22, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A.08</td>
<td>Maintaining Minimum Retroreflectivity</td>
<td>Replacement of street name signs and overhead guide signs that are identified using the assessment or management method as failing to meet the established minimum levels.</td>
<td>January 22, 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


| 2A.08                     | Maintaining Minimum Retroreflectivity | Implementation and continued use of an assessment or management method that is designed to maintain regulatory and warning sign retroreflectivity at or above the established minimum levels (see Paragraph 2) | 2 years from the effective date of this revision of the 2009 MUTCD*.

Footnote: * Types of signs other than regulatory or warning are to be added to an agency’s management or assessment method as resources allow.

These revisions can be summarized as follows:

- The compliance date for implementation and continued use of a method to maintain traffic sign retroreflectivity was changed from January 22, 2012 to June 13, 2014.
- The previous compliance dates for replacing existing signs not meeting the minimum retroreflectivity levels (January 2015 for most signs, and January 2018 for overhead guide signs and street name signs) were rescinded.

By now (June 2017), all agencies/jurisdictions responsible for roads open to public travel should have already implemented their retroreflectivity maintenance method(s); and should
be continuing to use their method(s) to maintain traffic sign retroreflectivity, including replacement of any signs they identify as being deficient.

What does elimination of the January 2015 and January 2018 compliance dates mean to agencies in terms of their sign maintenance responsibilities and activities?

Please refer to the source materials published by FHWA to assist with further clarification or interpretation of the revisions. These materials include the following statements:

“Even without a specific date, agencies will still need to replace any sign they identify as not meeting the established minimum retroreflectivity levels. Their schedules replacing the signs, however, would be based on resources and relative priorities, rather than specific compliance dates ...”  

Source: Final Rule, Federal Register Vol. 77, No. 93 (May 14, 2012)

“... Signs identified through an agency's method as being below the minimum established retroreflectivity levels have exhausted their useful service life. Such signs do not meet the needed function of being adequately visible at night; therefore, they need to be replaced. ... Similar to other occurrences of signs that are no longer serviceable, agencies are expected to prioritize replacement of these signs based on engineering considerations such as the relative importance of the sign to the safety of the road user, volumes and speed of nighttime traffic, and optimal use of limited resources, among others ...”

Source: Frequently Asked Questions – FHWA Sign Retroreflectivity Website (see page 4)

Per the Ohio MUTCD (Section 1A.07) and the Ohio Revised Code, the responsibility for the design, placement, operation, maintenance, and uniformity of traffic control devices rests with the public agency or the official having jurisdiction; or, in the case of private roads open to public travel, with the private owner or private official having jurisdiction. Agencies should be prepared to defend their retroreflectivity maintenance decisions and compliance activities, in the event of any future nighttime traffic crashes where sign visibility could be called into question. A lack of retroreflectivity compliance, or other lack of sign maintenance, could result in legal liability. Agencies are encouraged to review their sign retroreflectivity maintenance program and compliance activities with their legal counsel or risk manager.

How can I learn more about traffic sign retroreflectivity?

A number of resources are available online, including the following websites:
FHWA Nighttime Visibility – Sign Retroreflectivity Website
https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway_dept/night_visib/sign-retroreflectivity.cfm

Frequently Asked Questions
https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway_dept/night_visib/signfaq.cfm

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has 12 District offices throughout the state. General questions about traffic signs may be directed to the District Traffic Engineers, or to Jim Roth, P.E., Central Office Signing Engineer, at 614-752-0438.

ODOT’s Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) offers a half-day course on Traffic Sign Retroreflectivity Inspection. Sessions are usually scheduled for spring or early summer. Registration announcements are posted to the Training page of the Ohio LTAP website, at: http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/LocalPrograms/LTAP/Pages/TrainingCourseFlyers.aspx.

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