U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

September 15, 2005

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. Gerry Meis
Chief
Office of Signs, Markings and Permits
California Department of Transportation
1120 N Street, MS 36
Sacramento, CA 94273-0001

Dear Mr. Meis:

Thank you for your July 13 request for Interim Approval to install the Tsunami Symbol Sign in California. We have reviewed the background material that was included with your request.

When considering whether issuance of an Interim Approval (IA) under MUTCD Section 1A.10 might be appropriate for a new traffic control device (TCD), a revised application or manner of use of an existing TCD, or a provision not specifically described in the MUTCD, the following criteria must be satisfied:

1. Research and/or review of experience with the item proposed for IA has been completed and clearly shows the item is successful, and:
    a. It has a low risk of safety or operational concerns.
    b. Potential safety, operational, or cost benefits merit earlier implementation by agencies that wish to use it.
2. The item would be for optional use and the IA would not create a new mandate or recommendation for use.
3. There is an indication of strong consensus in the practitioner community in support of optional use of the item under IA. This consensus can be gauged by discussions of the item at the NCUTCD meetings and/or other forums as appropriate.
4. Low risk of significant negative reaction to the issuance of an IA by industry or other stakeholder groups.

These criteria set a high standard of safety and effectiveness because Interim Approvals provide for the widespread application of new traffic control devices in diverse settings. Your Interim Approval request package did not include any documented research or any other evidence that shows that road users can clearly comprehend the Tsunami Symbol and that this symbol has a low risk of safety and operational concerns. Also, the broader traffic control practitioner community has not had an opportunity to review the Tsunami symbol. Therefore, we are unable to approve your Interim Approval request at this time. In the event of a Tsunami warning, it is critical that road users comprehend the Tsunami Symbol Sign and be able to react in a safe and expected manner.

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Given the urgency to install these signs arising from recent Tsunami events in the Indian Ocean, we are approving experimentation of the five requested signs included in your letter. However, this approval is conditional upon your submittal of an evaluation plan, a list of the location sites or areas where these signs will be installed, and the length of the experimentation. In case you have not finalized the locations where these signs will be installed for experimentation, you can submit a tentative list of locations that can be amended later upon your request. This office will help you develop an evaluation plan for testing these signs and provide advice on how to collect data which would address the issue of how do unfamiliar drivers respond to the Tsunami Symbol.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this information and look forward to working together in this effort. For recordkeeping purposes, we have assigned the following official ruling number to your request: "2-568(E)—Tsunami Symbol (CA)." If you have additional questions, please contact Ms. Linda Brown of my staff at 202-366-2192 or email Ms. Linda L. Brown at **Linda.L.Brown@fhwa.dot.gov**.

Sincerely yours,

Regina S. McElroy
Director, Office of Transportation
Operations