

Inductive Loop Guide

Introduction

An inductive loop is basically a metal detector installed in the surface of the roadway. It consists of electrical wire embedded in the roadway, which establishes a magnetic field around the wire whenever a current of electricity is passed through it. This field extends approximately 48" (detection height) above the loop. This detection height is based off of the shortest side of your loop and is typically 2/3 of that length. Example: A 6'x6' loop will have a detection height of 48 inches. This height is measured from the top of the top most wire in the wrap (as stacked vertically). When a metal object of sufficient mass passes through that field; the amplitude, phase and frequency of the electronic circuit is changed. The electronic circuit is designed to look at one of these parameters and detect this disruption, thereby registering a vehicle (metal object) count.

The sensitivity of most vehicle detectors is such that it takes an object the size of a 5 gallon steel paint bucket passing through the center of the loop to trigger the circuitry. As a rule, most vehicles will be detected if they drive alongside one of the edges of the loop. From an installation design standpoint, you should size the loop and position it so that at least one foot of the passing vehicle body is over the loop at any time. If the loop is bigger than 5' x 8', opt for even more overlay. In general; center the loop in the traffic lane insuring no point of the loop is closer than 2 feet from any lane that is not being counted.

The inductive loop sensor embedded in the road is a type of radio antenna (RF Emitter). They operate at a very low power and a frequency that does not bother most other radio devices; however their function can be disrupted by strong CB radio transmissions, overhead power lines and nearby lightning strikes. The TT-14/21/41/51[®] counters have built in RF and EMP protection for the circuits for most cases, but these anomalies, while not damaging the unit, generally cause the traffic counter to register false counts. This is generally not a significant problem except for overhead or underground AC power lines. We recommend installing counters 75 feet from 440 volt lines and 500 feet from large power lines.

Common loop sizes are:

- 6' x 6' (most common) or 5' x 5' with 3 to 4 wraps of wire
- 5' x 8', 5' x 10' and 5' x 12' with 3 wraps of wire
- All wires are generally 14 AWG (American Wire Gauge) multi-strands, with insulation jacket impervious to water, sunlight, gasoline, oil and mildew

Basic Site Selection Guidelines

If you are counting only one lane of a two lane road, verify that cars stay in their assigned lane and that they are ideally traveling faster than 10 Mph.

NOTE: *If travel speeds are slower than 10 Mph, or in the event of a long vehicle, then you will likely need to be concerned with the setting of the time delay feature on the TT-14/21/41/51[®].*

If you are installing more than 1 loop in a road, do not install them directly opposite each other. Instead, stagger them about 10' from edge to edge so as not to cause radio frequency interference between the loops (also known as crosstalk).

The TT-14/21/41/51® series traffic counters are single inductive loop counters with a battery life of 12 - 18 months. Do not locate them more than 50' from the loop without first consulting Diamond Traffic Products (support@diamondtraffic.com or 541-782-3903).

NOTE: *In order to locate one of these traffic counters more than 50' from the loops, the factory will have to make circuit modifications for the counters to work at that distance. This modification will require a larger power draw, which will result in a slight reduction of battery life.*

The Pegasus®, Unicorn® and Phoenix® counter/classifiers are capable of operating 4 to 16 loops. Battery life varies from 1 to 4 weeks depending upon the number of loops being used. These counters are capable of being located several hundred feet away from the loops. They can also tolerate slower vehicles, and vehicles stopped over the loop for a short period of time (about 45 to 90 seconds).

Directional Traffic

If you have a two lane road where vehicles TRAVEL in their assigned lanes, you can install a separate loop in each lane and obtain count data for each lane. You will need to connect each loop to its own traffic counter, or to a traffic counter that has two or more loop detector channels.

For assistance in selecting the proper counter, contact Diamond Traffic Products at support@diamondtraffic.com or 541-782-3903.

If you have a narrow road where traffic traveling in both directions drives down the center of the roadway, you can only get a TOTAL combined traffic count unless you install two or more loops and the appropriate traffic counter.

If directional information is required, you will need a unit that can monitor multiple loops. The Pegasus, Unicorn or Phoenix field units are best situated to give you directional information when 2 loops are installed in the same lane of travel. These units can also provide classification by length.

Install the traffic counter at the side of the road, but avoid drainage ditches and wet areas. Give thought as to how you are going to protect the traffic counter from flood water, snow, vandalism and theft. Most agencies at permanent sites where there is no pedestrian traffic, locate counters in a recess in the ground that cannot be observed by passing vehicles. You can dig a 2 or 3 foot deep hole and fill it halfway or better with coarse rocks for drainage and install a simple wood or metal frame/wall on top of the rock to keep dirt and debris from sifting into the recessed well. Cover the recessed well with boards or plywood to complete the installation. For increased concealment, these wells are typically located behind a tree or bush.



If visibility is not of a concern, then one of our security boxes on a 4" diameter, 4' long steel post could be installed. The security post is typically anchored in 2' of concrete and extends 2' above ground. The aluminum security box is bolted to the top of the post. If you are in a location where pedestrians will likely spot the counter, or flooding is an issue; we recommend using this lockable security box. See our catalog or website (www.diamondtraffic.com) for security boxes and cabinets that we offer.

Paved Road Loops

Paved road loops must be installed by cutting a square or rectangular slot in the roadway to receive the loop wire (See Diagram 1 – Slot Cuts). The slot typically measures 1/4 inch (4mm) in width and is cut to a depth of 1 1/2 to 2 inches (4 – 5 cm) deep.

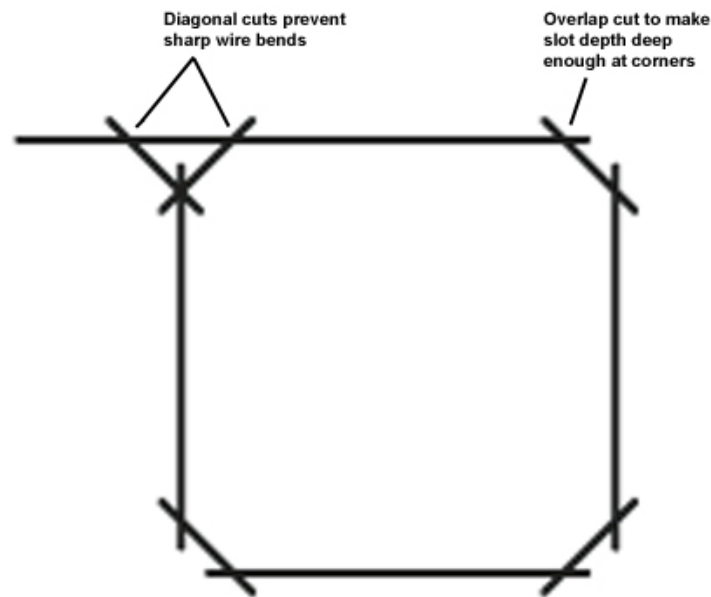


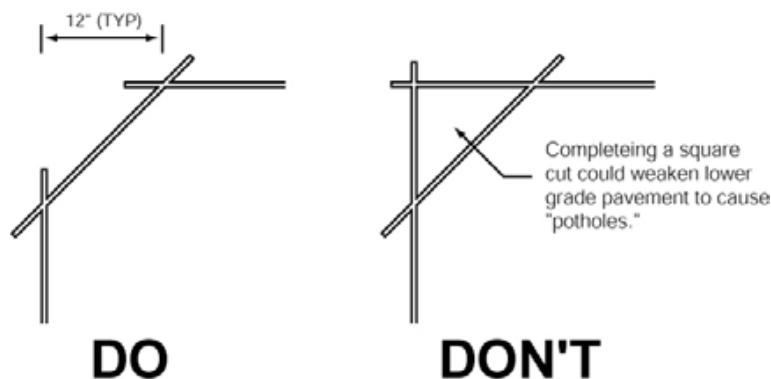
Diagram 1 – Slot Cuts

If the pavement thickness is very shallow, opt for the 1 1/2 inch deep slot.

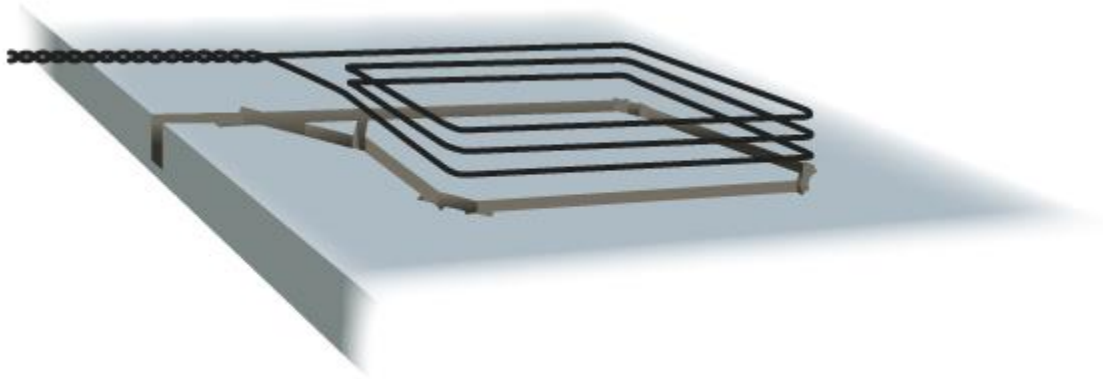
Because the 90 degree corners of these inductive loops have a sharp inside edge that will damage the loop wire insulation, you will need to cut a 45 degree slash cut across each corner. This cut should start about 12 inches (30 cm) back from the corner to prevent the small triangular piece of pavement in the center of the corner cuts from breaking out.

Once your saw cuts have been made, clean out any mud and debris from inside, and around each of the cuts. Garden hose water pressure is sufficient. You may then use compressed air to blow excess water and any remaining debris out of each slot.

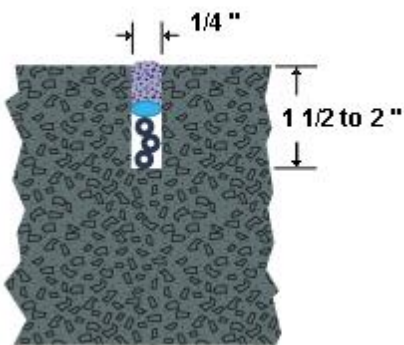
If air is not available, rags and paint stirring sticks can be used to dry the slot, as the slot must be dry before wire installation.



NOTE: Do not forget to cut the slot for the "Home Run" lead wire to the edge of the pavement. In other words you will need to cut a slot for each loop that leads from the loop to the pavement edge and over to the traffic counter. One slot per loop is sufficient.

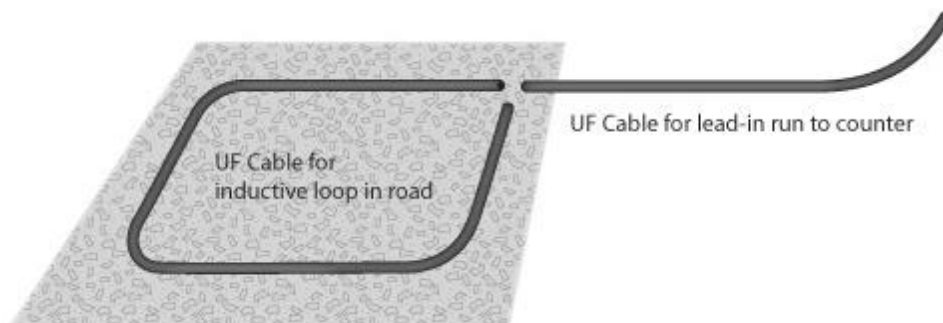


When all slots are dry and clean, commence laying loop wire. Start at the point where the counter will be installed. Run the wire to and through the lead-in slot to the corner of the loop. Continue to lay the wire around the loop slots; clock-wise or counter-clockwise will not matter as long as you are consistent through the loop. Lay in three or four passes around the loop saw cut. Exiting the loop perimeter, twist both loop wires together four to eight times per linear foot from the edge of the loop to the counter location. Refer to the above diagram for further clarification.



The portion of the wire that is outside the pavement transitioning to the traffic counter location should be protected with plastic PVC pipe (1/2 or 3/4 inch). This adds an additional layer of protection for the loop wire.

Connect the two loop wires to the loop input pairs of your loop harness using solder and seal the joints between loop wire and the loop harness to prevent corrosion. The use of electrical wire nuts is not recommended. Refer to your unit's instruction manual for any specific color pair combination.

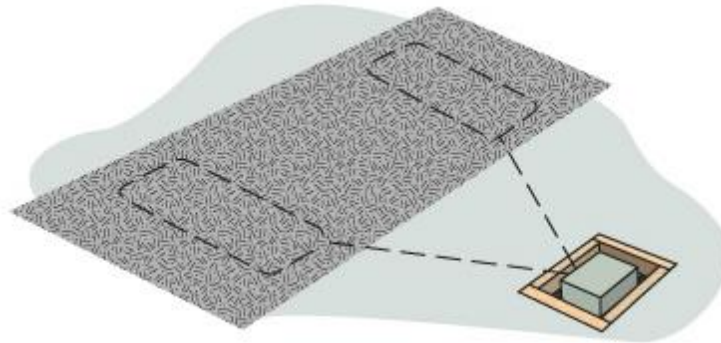


NOTE: Failure to properly solder these will eventually cause counting problems due to oxidation.

Seal the open slot in the roadway with the appropriate sealant for the pavement type; crack sealant, epoxy loop sealant, or a variety of other sealants. Our recommendation is Pro Seal 6006 Loop Sealant. **DO NOT USE HOT TAR**, and hard setting epoxies should not be used with asphalt.

Dirt and Gravel Loops

The 14 gauge wire used in paved road installation does not have a sufficient insulation jacket to withstand the sharp rocks and gravel. Therefore, inductive loops in unpaved roads are constructed using 14-gauge, 3 or 4 conductor direct buried UF cable. This is readily available at most local hardware or building supply stores. We also stock it here at [Diamond Traffic Products](#) as a service to our customers.



To install an inductive loop in an unpaved road, you generally must install a loop that covers the roadway from side to side, to within four feet of each edge. Without lane assignment markings, drivers on dirt and gravel roads typically will drive on the right, left and/or in the middle of these roads. If you need directional counts, consider installing two loops as diagrammed in the 'Directional Traffic' section.

For example, whether you're collecting 'Combined Count' or 'Directional' data; if your road is 25 feet wide, your loop should measure 5' x 17'

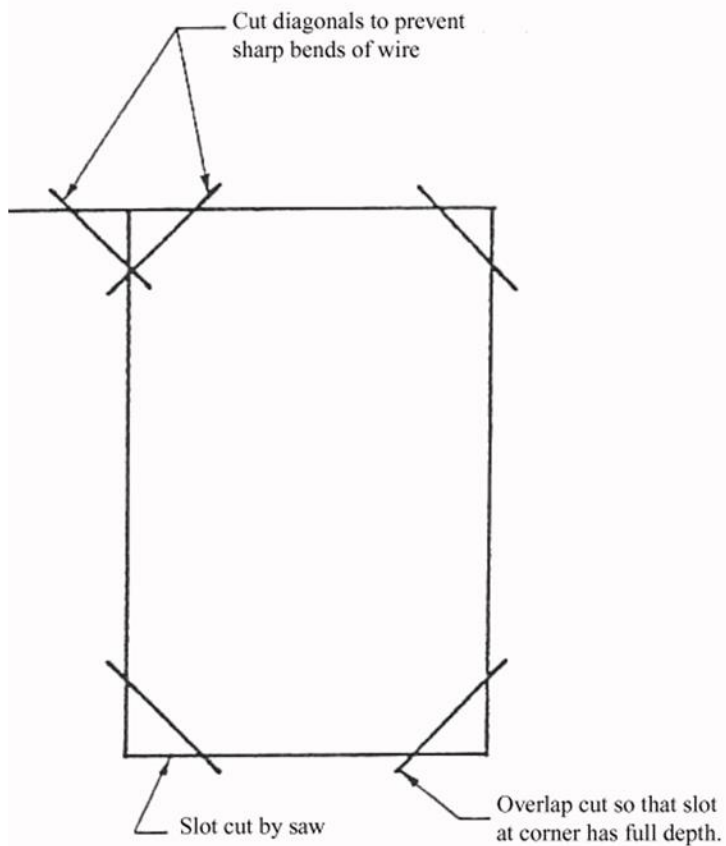
Having decided upon the loop size, cut two lengths as follows: Add together the lengths of the four loop sides, the length of the lead-in (home run) and 5 – 6 additional feet as spare.

Splice the wires as shown in Diagram 2 – Loop Installation. Stagger your joints as the finished insulated joint will be thick and bulky. **SOLDER YOUR JOINTS.** You can use the 3m Scotch® 2200 vinyl splice kit, however it is big, rigid and expensive. Two layers of shrink tube, wrapped with several wraps of electrical tape, then covered with roofing tar works very well.

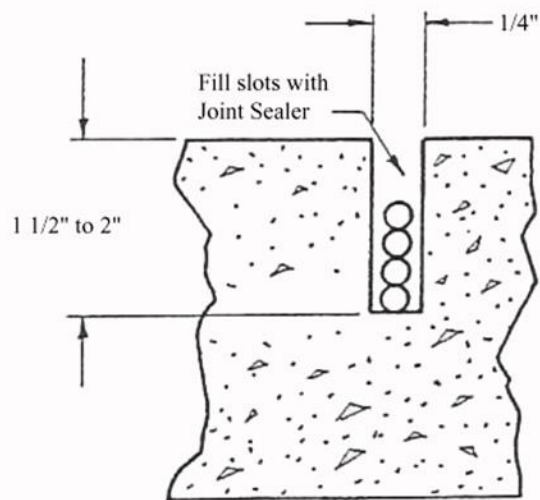
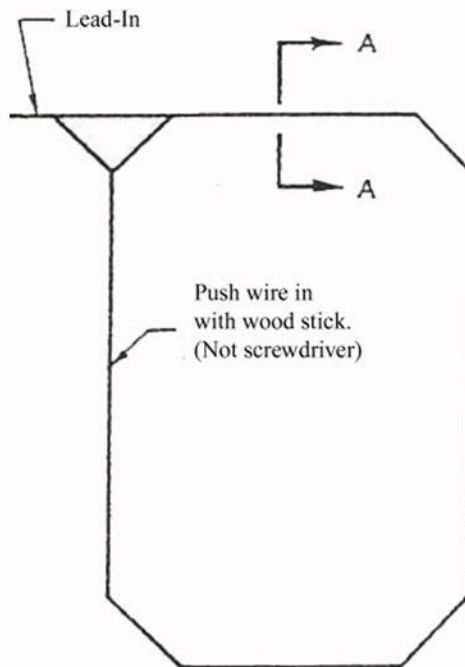
The loop wire in paved roads is only 1 1/2 to 2 inches below the road surface. For gravel roads, you need to consider how deep the road grader reworks the road. If the grader uses the blade only, then ten inches below the surface is sufficient. If they typically drop their rip teeth and re-level the road, we advise that you install at a depth of 18 inches.

While it is not absolutely necessary to back fill over the loop wire with sand or soft soil, we recommend doing so to prevent potential damage caused by sharp rocks lying against the UF cable.

SLOT CUT PLAN



ACTUAL SLOT USED BY LOOP



Section A-A

Loop In Roadway

Diagram 1 – Slot Cuts

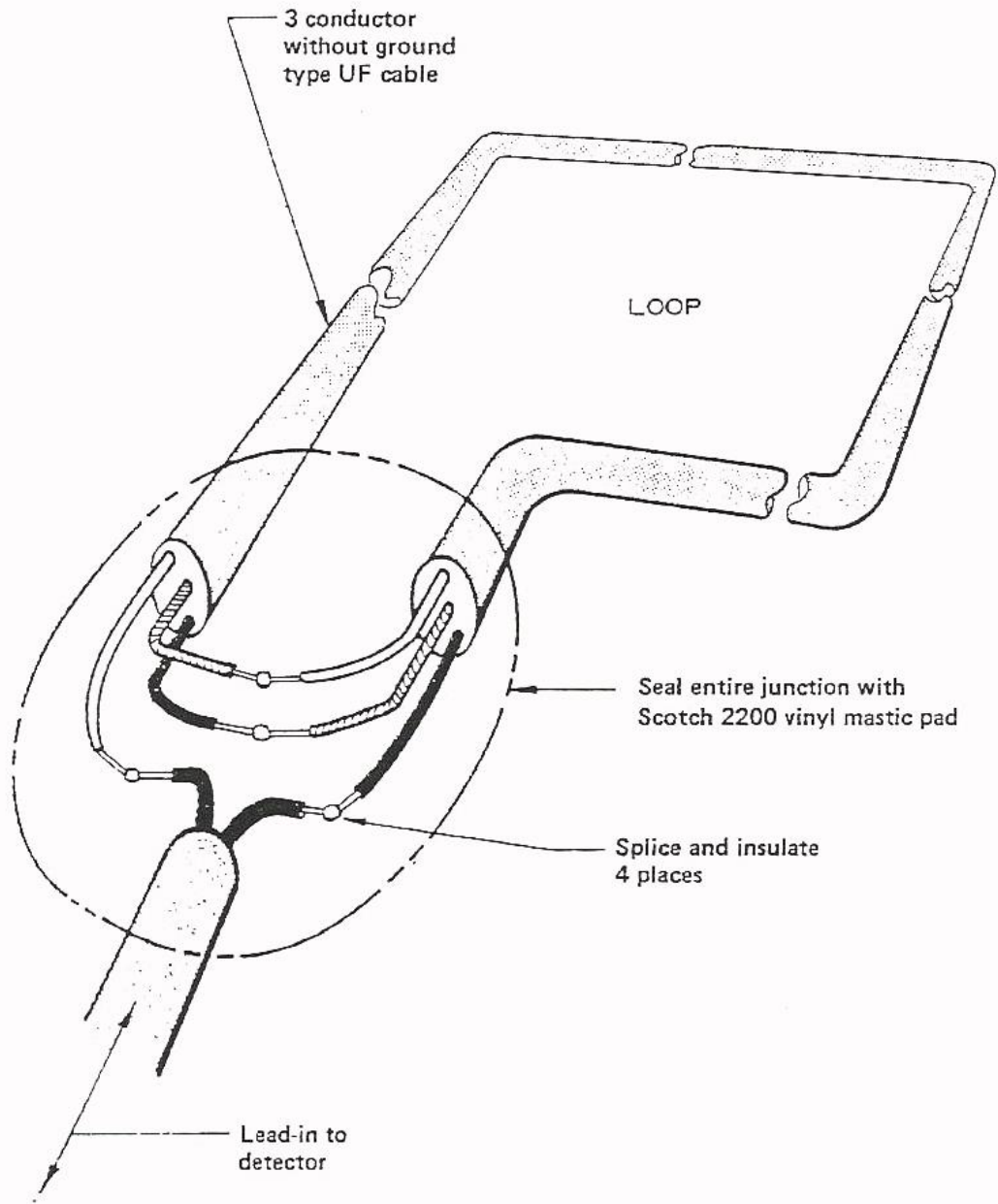


Diagram 2 – Loop Installation

ALLOWED INDUCTIVE LOOP ANTENNAS

The 4 Channel inductive loop detector version #2.10 was designed to operate in the FCC allowed RF Frequency for sizes and inductive values listed in chart below.

Size, shape, number of turns and induction are critical to keep in the operating frequency within the FCC allowed limits. Loop sizes and turns listed below, shown in the yellow area of the following table, will cause the detector to operate outside of the FCC legal frequency. Also, due to their small size and few turns; these loop configurations will detect vehicles poorly, if not at all. These highlighted configurations also do not meet the loop specifications required of the TT-14/21/41/51 units.

Best practices call for a minimum of at least (3) turns. If the loop antenna is any other size than those listed below. Please contact **Diamond Traffic Products** for assistance: support@diamondtraffic.com or 541-782-3903

** Number indicates micro-henries (μh), unless otherwise noted **

Length (ft)	Width (ft)	1 Turn	2 Turns	3 Turns	4 Turns	5 Turns	Detection Height
2	4	5	16	33	55	81	1.3 ft
2	6	6	22	45	75	112	1.3 ft
2	8	8	28	57	95	142	1.3 ft
4	4	7	23	47	79	118	2.6 ft
4	6	9	29	61	103	153	2.6 ft
4	8	10	36	75	126	188	2.6 ft
4	10	12	43	89	149	223	2.6 ft
4	12	14	49	102	172	257	2.6 ft
4	14	16	56	116	195	292	2.6 ft
4	16	18	62	129	218	326	2.6 ft
5	5	9	30	72	104	155	3.3 ft
5	8	11	40	83	140	209	3.3 ft
5	10	13	52	97	164	245	3.3 ft
6	6	11	37	76	129	192	4.0 ft
6	8	13	44	91	154	230	4.0 ft
6	10	14	51	106	178	267	4.0 ft
6	12	16	58	120	203	305	4.0 ft
6	14	18	65	135	228	342	4.0 ft
6	16	20	71	149	252	379	4.0 ft
6	18	22	78	164	277	416	4.0 ft
6	20	24	85	178	301	452	4.0 ft
6	22	26	92	193	326	489	4.0 ft
6	24	28	99	207	350	526	4.0 ft
8	8	15	51	107	180	270	5.3 ft

Antenna Information

Users (government agencies) install the inductive loop sensor antennas in the road surface. The typical traffic counting loop will use 14 to 18 gauge; 8-80 strand wire in loops ranging from 4 ft X 4 ft to 8 ft X 8 ft, with lead-in wire length ranging from 25 ft to 600 ft long. The effective inductance is kept within a defined range as detailed in the Road Loop Installation Guide.

Loop inductance must be between 65 μH to 500 μH . The oscillation frequency will range from 88 kHz for 65 μH to 29 kHz for 500 μH . Transmitted power is effectively the same throughout this range. During installation, the loop antennas are permanently soldered to the loop detector by professional installers according to the loop installation guide.