

# Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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August 2, 2004



TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Re: "No Trespassing" signs

Dear Brothers:

The purpose of this letter is to provide further clarification on the application of "No Trespassing" signs to our door-to-door ministry. Please file this letter with other organizational policy letters and destroy the July 1, 1994, letter to all bodies of elders in the United States on the same subject.

In the past, some publishers have chosen to call at homes bearing "No Trespassing" signs without having undue concern about being subject to arrest and prosecution for violation of criminal trespass laws. However, we are living in an increasingly violent world as man advances from bad to worse. As a result, more and more people are expressing and enforcing their desire to not have uninvited individuals on their property.—2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13.

As a general rule, householders have a right to privacy and the right to prohibit anyone, including publishers, from entering their property by posting a "No Trespassing" sign. Publishers need to be aware of the possible consequences of ignoring a "No Trespassing" sign.

If publishers call at a home or enter the grounds around a home where a "No Trespassing" sign is posted, they may be subject to criminal prosecution and resulting monetary sanctions and/or incarceration. Fines in some states are very high and incarceration for any length of time can be extremely traumatic. To be prosecuted for such conduct is a real possibility and a serious matter. In addition, we are living in litigious times. Publishers ignoring a posted directive to stay away may also face civil liability if sued by an irate householder.—Matt. 10:16.

Publishers should keep in mind that if they decide not to go to a particular door because of a posted "No Trespassing" sign, other means of contacting the homeowner are available, such as telephone witnessing or letter writing.—1 Cor. 9:22, 23.

It is important to note that a "No Trespassing" sign posted on a *home* may be different from a "No Trespassing" sign placed on a *public street* or at the entrance to a community or apartment complex. If you have a question about whether such a "No Trespassing" sign applies to our ministry, please contact the Legal Department at the address shown in the letterhead above.

Additionally, "No Trespassing" signs are different from signs such as "No Soliciting," "No Peddling," or "No Canvassing." If a *municipality* endeavors to enforce the application of such signs to our preaching activity, please contact the Legal Department. However, if a *householder* at any time informs a publisher that such a sign posted on his property applies to our ministry, the publisher should assure the householder that future calls at his home will cease. This also applies to householders who do not have any sign posted, but insist on receiving no

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

August 2, 2004

Page 2

further calls by Jehovah's Witnesses. In the past, the branch office has received calls from householders upset that their wishes were not respected. To prevent this, elders should take reasonable steps to ensure that we comply with their requests. After such homes have been identified, a dated note should be placed in the territory envelope. The territory file should be reviewed once a year, making a list of the homes where we have been advised not to call. Under the direction of the service overseer, some tactful, experienced publishers can be assigned to visit these homes to determine if there has been any change in the occupant's attitude toward our ministry.—See June 1994 *Our Kingdom Ministry* Question Box.

Upon receipt of this letter, book study overseers should review the following points with those in their groups:

- Individual homeowners have a right to exclude people from their property by posting a “No Trespassing” sign.
- If publishers call on a home or enter the grounds around a home where a “No Trespassing” sign is located, they may be subject to criminal prosecution and resulting monetary sanctions and/or incarceration. They also face being sued by the householder.
- Such homes may be worked by means of the telephone or letter writing.—See May 2003 *Our Kingdom Ministry* Question Box; “Communicating Through Letters,” *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, pages 71-3; May 2002 *Our Kingdom Ministry* Question Box; “Successful Telephone Witnessing,” February 2001 *Our Kingdom Ministry*, pages 5-6; “Successful Kingdom Proclaimers Use the Telephone,” April 15, 1998, *Watchtower*, box on page 27; “Telephone Witnessing—A Way to Reach Many,” August 1993 *Our Kingdom Ministry*, pages 3-4; and November 1996 *Our Kingdom Ministry* Question Box.
- “No Trespassing” signs are different from “No Soliciting,” “No Peddling,” and “No Canvassing” signs. However, if a householder at any time informs a publisher that his sign applies to our ministry (no matter what the wording of that sign may be), the publisher should reassure the householder that future calls at his home will cease. This can be done by simply stating:

The application of the sign was not clear to us from its wording. Steps will now be taken to make certain that no further calls are made at your home by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Thereafter, a dated note should be placed in the territory envelope listing the name and address of such individuals.

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We trust this will answer questions publishers have regarding “No Trespassing” signs. It is a pleasure to work shoulder to shoulder with you in accomplishing the work our Master has entrusted to us.—Zeph. 3:9; Matt. 28:19, 20.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation  
of Jehovah's Witnesses*