

# Traffic control/flaggers

By Connie L. Muncy

## Before you begin

Review this information and your organization's policies with respect to safe flagging operations. Have available for the group a copy of the *Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (OMUTCD) and a sample copy of a traffic control plan.



## Introduction

In 2006, more than 1,000 people died as a result of motor vehicle crashes in work zones, according to the Federal Highway Administration. That number has increased by 45 percent over the past decade. Flaggers must receive proper training to ensure their own safety as well as all of those who depend on them, including work crews, motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

## Discussion

Ask the group to identify common flagging errors. Answers might include seeing flaggers:

- Not wearing an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Class 2 or 3 high visibility garment, or not wearing a garment properly. (Flaggers should ensure they wear and fasten garments properly to guarantee maximum visibility.);
- Using a non-standard flagging technique or not having a paddle or flag;
- Standing in a blind area without sufficient advance notice to drivers (hilltops, road bends, etc.);
- Turning their back on traffic, crossing the centerline or leaving no escape route;
- Becoming distracted, chatting with others or straying from their post.

Ask the group to discuss proper placement for flaggers. Answers might include:

- At the beginning of the taper (on lane closures);
- On the shoulder or in a barricaded lane;
- Never in the path of moving vehicles;
- Never abandoning the post until relieved by another flagger.

Ask the group to list factors affecting the visibility of the flagger from a driver's point of view. These might include:

- Hills;
- Curves;
- Obstructions;
- Shade;
- Color contrast;
- Bad weather;
- Darkness;
- Other workers.

Ask the group to list factors affecting vehicle stopping distance. These might include:

- Traffic volume and traffic speed;
- Vehicle weight;
- Pedestrians and bikes;
- Road condition;
- Hills;
- Weather conditions;
- Visibility.

Ask the group to list factors affecting driver's abilities. These might include:

- The road itself;
- Weather;
- Alcohol and drugs;
- Exhaustion;
- Driver's experience;
- Driver's age.

Finally, remind the group that the factors discussed are vitally important. Also, remind the group members that they must take appropriate measures to protect themselves and, in turn, everyone else who depends on them in work zones. Remind them that flaggers must:

- Always use standard flagging technique per the OMUTCD;
- Remain vigilant at all times;
- Never cross the centerline;
- Always have an escape route;
- Always expect the unexpected;
- Never trust the driver;
- Have an effective way to quickly alert the work crew of errant vehicles (such as an air horn, whistle or other warning that they can sound quickly and hear even under noisy conditions).

### Group activity

- Present a copy of a traffic control plan from the OMUTCD and have the group identify the proper location for the flagger.
- Mark the floor with masking tape to resemble a mock roadway. Supply the group with a traffic paddle and flag and take turns demonstrating proper technique on each for stopping, slowing and releasing traffic. Have group members critique one another, with an emphasis on observing anyone crossing the centerline, turning their back on traffic or forgetting to make a proper check before releasing traffic.
- Have one group member demonstrate errant vehicle procedure and have the rest of the group critique the demonstration. Did he/she act quickly, remembering to, in this order:
  1. Move out of the way;
  2. Effectively warn co-workers;
  3. Return to his or her post to continue to direct traffic;
  4. Note any information concerning the errant vehicle.

### References

Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices  
<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Operations/Traffic/publications2/OhioMUTCD>

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