

HIGH-VISIBILITY SAFETY APPAREL

Roadside styles will be bright this year - and will stay that way indefinitely. A new federal regulation (23 CFR 634), effective November 24, 2008, mandates that anyone working in the right of way of a federal-aid (interstate) highway must wear high-visibility clothing that meets U.S. requirements. Later this year, another rule (23 CFR Part 655) will require workers on all public roads to wear high-visibility apparel in accordance with ANSI/ISEA 107-2004.

For emergency personnel deployed on roadways in response to an accident or other emergency situation, high visibility vests serve as the first line of defense against dangerous highway traffic.

After 23 CFR 634 was finalized, a new standard for Public Safety Vests was published as ANSI/ISEA 207-2006. The latest standard outlines important design and performance criteria for vests worn by police officers, firefighters, emergency medical services and other public safety personnel. There are some exceptions for law enforcement working on an incident involving criminal activity.

The ANSI/ISEA 207-2006 standard for high visibility public safety vests is designed to increase the safety and visibility of emergency responders. Vests that meet ANSI/ISEA 207-2006 combine fluorescent and retro-reflective materials for enhanced visibility under the most compromised lighting conditions, such as inclement weather. The standard also includes important break-away design features. Fastened with Velcro® rather than zippers, buttons or a sewn seam, a break-away vest, should it get caught on a passing vehicle, can be pulled quickly and easily away from a responder's body.

ANSI/ISEA 207 also includes features specific to the needs of emergency responders, such as a cut-out side for a police officer's weapon or EMS belt-mounted equipment. The standard also specifies that the vest be large enough to be worn over a firefighter's coat. To clearly distinguish between different types of emergency personnel, ANSI/ISEA 207 allows for color-specific markings on



the vest panel or trim of police, fire and EMS responders' clothing.

Sources for More Information

ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 American National Standard for High Visibility Safety Apparel

ANSI/ISEA 207-2006 American National Standard for High-Visibility Safety Vests

“High-visibility safety apparel” is personal protective clothing intended to make the wearer conspicuous day and night. Garments must meet the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004.

“Within the right of way” refers to roadside areas exposed to traffic (vehicles using the highway for travel) or construction equipment within a roadside work area.