

Work Zone Visibility

October 2007

In November 2008, the Federal Highway Administration's High Visibility mandate will take effect. This requirement is designed to protect workers exposed to the low-light and poor-light hazards of vehicular traffic.

The worker visibility provisions state that, within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway, all workers exposed to either traffic or construction equipment within the work area shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of the American National Standard for High Visibility Apparel (ANSI 107). Good safety policy and practice, however, should extend these mandates to all workers exposed to vehicular traffic, regardless of location.

Class 1 garments – are designed for use in activities that permit the wearer's full and undivided attention to approaching traffic with ample separation of workers from traffic (e.g., parking lot attendants and delivery vehicle drivers).

Class 2 garments – are defined as apparel for use in activities where greater visibility is necessary during inclement weather conditions or in work environments with risks exceeding those for Class 1; for example, survey crews, school crossing guards, airport baggage handlers, railway workers – anyone who performs tasks that divert their attention from approaching traffic or put them in close proximity to passing vehicles.

Class 3 garments – which provide the highest level of visibility, are defined as apparel for those who work as emergency response personnel and roadway construction flaggers, who face serious hazards and have high task loads that focus attention away from inherent risk. Class 3 garments should provide enhanced visibility to more of the body, such as the arms and legs, making the wearer conspicuous through the full range of movement.

Research shows that as health risks increase, costs increase; as health risks decrease, costs decrease.

According to the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), struck-by-vehicle accidents accounted for 336 fatalities across all industries in 2003, and more than 40,000 injuries resulted from motor vehicle crashes in work zones. Road workers are eight times more likely to be injured than the average worker and twice as likely to be hurt as other construction workers.



Roadway workers are not the only ones at risk of being struck by roadway traffic or moving equipment. According to the CFOI for 2003, 84 truck drivers; 21 security services workers; 13 law enforcement

officers; nine electric, gas, and sanitary service workers; seven building and grounds maintenance workers; and five firefighters were struck and killed by vehicles while working near a roadway.

Employers typically think of safety vests when they think of high-visibility garments, and vests might be the right choice in some instances, but are not necessarily the best choice when it comes to worker comfort. Keep in mind that ANSI 107 is an apparel *standard* and allows for a much wider range of choices than just vests. When selecting high-visibility apparel, it is critical to consider specific worker needs, selecting apparel that offers high visibility and comfort for daytime, low-light and nighttime conditions in a variety of work environments. Note also that a 2002 survey found that lack of style and comfort was a key reason why some workers did not wear safety vests. And while traditional vests still have a place, they are now being replaced with a surprising range of alternatives.

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In warm weather, choose garments with reflective materials and ultra-lightweight knit fabrics or blends designed to accelerate the evaporation of body moisture. In cold weather, provide workers with garments made with warm, lightweight and comfortable insulation. These high-visibility garments are available from several garment manufacturers. High-visibility headgear should also be factored into the choice of safety apparel.

Remember that in addition to the many factors that must be considered when selecting the right garment for the right job, there are now numerous options for comfortable, compliant, high-visibility apparel that your employees will be pleased to wear. To create a compliant High Work Zone Visibility Policy and Procedure for your agency or company:

- Obtain and review copies of relevant standards and regulations to help guide your decisions

- Conduct a work-site survey to determine which workers are exposed to these specific risks
- Select garments for workers that factor in their work environment and job function, as well as comfort, appearance and durability needs
- Write a policy based on specific performance criteria for each garment type and job function
- Provide training for workers in the purpose and proper use of their new garments



References

1. Occupational Safety and Health, "Meeting the Work Zone Visibility Deadline", August 2007
2. Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003
3. American National Standard for High Visibility Apparel (ANSI/ISEA 107-2004)

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