

Work Zone Safety, Part 2: Operations

Keeping everyone safe in work zones requires tools, practices and people.

Traffic Control Devices (TCDs)

Traffic control devices (TCDs) provide advance warning to motorists, delineate travel paths, and separate traffic from workers. Examples include:

- Signs
- Drums
- Cones
- Message boards
- Chevrons
- Barricades
- Concrete barriers
- Traffic lights

At a MINIMUM, TCDs must be clean, maintained and made of approved materials (not homemade). Specific requirements for TCDs are in your work zone safety plan, which should meet or exceed the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* standards.

Ensure TCDs:

- Are applicable
- Don't have conflicting instructions/information
- Have directions/arrows pointed where traffic should go
- Are placed/distanced appropriately

Traffic cones must be:

- Orange
- Reflective (for night use)
- At least 28" tall
(states may require taller)
- Weighted or doubled to stay upright,
as needed

Drums must:

- NOT be recycled 55-gallon drums
- Be lightweight and flexible
- Be at least 36" by 18"
- Have closed tops
- Be orange with white stripes
- Have drain holes for water buildup
- Be weighted, as needed

Traffic control devices need enough weight to be stable, but not so much that they can become missiles. Place weights low, and do NOT place weights on top of the TCD or use weights made of concrete.

Safe Practices

Wear **high-visibility gear** in work zones. Choose fluorescent colors that contrast with your surroundings as much as possible. You may need to wear garments that reflect light off fronts, sides and back. Keep traffic vests and reflective garments clean, maintained and visible.

When you are in a work zone:

- Face oncoming traffic (even when resetting displaced drums)
- Instead of bending near open traffic lanes, use your foot to position traffic cones
 - Be aware of construction vehicles and equipment (listen for backup alarms)
- Stay within the work zone and out of the buffer area
- Do not cross open lanes of traffic

Correct problems immediately. When you see problems that you can't fix right away, tell your supervisor and follow up to ensure resolution. When inspecting/traveling, stay in the vehicle cab and wear your seatbelt.

Know emergency procedures and warning signals for uncontrolled vehicles. For motor-vehicle accidents in the work zone, follow company procedures, assist people carefully, and watch out for secondary collisions.

Night Operations

Night operations may enjoy less traffic, but there are also dangers of which you should be aware, including: reduced visibility, speeding drivers, impaired/fatigued/inattentive drivers/workers and lights blinding drivers/workers. To increase the visibility of operations at night:

- Wear vests OVER other clothing
- Use lights aimed away from motorists
- Give flaggers light wands or chemical light sticks
- Lay flares on the ground (do not hold them)

Flaggers

Flaggers alert motorists to the presence of a work zone and communicate to them about where to stop and how to proceed. They should be:

- Experienced
- Healthy
- Professional
- Assertive
- Trained/ knowledgeable about work/safety
- Certified (in some states)

Place advance warning signs before flagging stations. These may include: "Road Work Ahead," "Flagger Ahead," or "Prepare to Stop." Make sure stations are visible; consider all conditions and factors. Plan an escape path in case something goes wrong.

Use stop/slow paddles that meet or exceed *MUTCD* and other applicable standards: 18" x 18" octagons with 5' to 7' handles. Only use flags in emergencies. Contractors may be exposed to liability if a non-standard device is involved in an accident. Signals and directions to motorists must be clear and distinct. Only give **three commands: stop, go, and slow down.**

Flaggers must ALWAYS be visible:

- Don't mingle with other workers
- Wear distinctive vests and gear
- STAND UP
- Do not park vehicles near flaggers

Flaggers should:

- Remain professional and polite
- Keep conversations brief
- Stay visible to all traffic

Vehicles and fixed objects can impair visibility and block escape routes in case motorists don't respond to directions.

Dealing with Angry Motorists

When dealing with angry motorists, alert the crew, record what happened, note the vehicle description/plate and driver description, and call the police. Do NOT argue, retaliate or try to stop the vehicle.