Flagger Safety Meeting Kit



What’s At Stake

On jobsites that perform road repairs, utility pole maintenance, and other duties on or near busy roadways, flaggers are employed to help control the flow of traffic, as a control to assist in keeping their team and passing drivers safe. But flaggers face unique hazards, making it crucial to follow proper flagger safety techniques each time they pick up the flag.

What’s the Danger

MAIN FLAGGER HAZARDS. Flaggers from all around the country face two major hazards during the workday.

High-Speed Traffic: When cars are traveling at high speeds, it takes a significant amount of time to bring them to a full stop. For example, a car traveling at 60 miles per hour will need an estimated 400 feet to completely stop.

When working near high-speed traffic like this, driver inattention or any number of other factors can quickly result in an accident. In cases like these, the flaggers who work closest to this traffic can be severely harmed, making it crucial to implement proper flagger safety strategies.

Angry or Aggressive Drivers: When roadwork causes severe delays or drivers are impatient to get to their destinations, tensions can often reach a boiling point. In these cases, angry or aggressive drivers may try to drive around flaggers or even harm them directly.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PROTECTION/MITIGATION – SAFETY MEASURES

Wear high-visibility clothing: To ensure that drivers can see them from far away, sources recommend flaggers wear red, orange, yellow, or green vests during the day and retro-reflective vests at night.

Wear protective equipment: In case an accident occurs or roadway debris strikes a flagger, they are encouraged to wear a hard hat, a long-sleeve shirt and pants, and other weather-appropriate gear.

Plan an escape route: Flaggers are encouraged to plan an escape route in cases of emergency. For example, in cases where inattentive drivers don’t brake soon enough or aggressive drivers express intent to harm, flaggers can quickly follow these routes

to get to safety.

Treat motorists with respect: By treating drivers with courtesy and not responding to angry outbursts or picking fights, flaggers can better ensure their safety on the jobsite. In cases where motorists are being obstinate, they should notify local law enforcement.

Strategize your location: Flaggers should stand alone and in clear view on the shoulder of the road. This way, instructions will be clearer for drivers, and they will be better able to avoid the flaggers as they pass.

Stay alert and focused: To stay as safe as possible, it is important for flaggers to remain alert and focused at all times. Since traffic moves fast, hazards can appear quickly. By staying aware of their surroundings, flaggers can identify them when they occur and prevent them successfully.

BEST SAFETY FLAGGER WORK PRACTICES

Remain alert at all times while on duty. Face traffic and stand off to the side on the shoulder or in the closed lane of traffic to avoid moving vehicles. Don’t enter the open roadway until traffic has stopped. Don’t multi-task while you are flagging. A split second awareness and emergency response on your part can save lives.

- To stop traffic, stand in a safe location on the shoulder of the road, away from moving traffic.
- Face traffic and extend the Stop paddle in a stationary position with your arm extended horizontally away from your body.
- Your free arm should be raised with your palm toward approaching traffic.
- Look directly at the approaching driver. Make sure that you make direct eye contact with the driver.
- Remain on the shoulder of the road after the first vehicle has stopped.
- Always make certain that the flagger and the paddle are visible to the drivers of all stopped vehicles.
- The flagger should never stand in the traffic lane unless, in the flagger’s opinion, the drivers of the stopped vehicles are unaware of the flagger’s presence.
- If it’s necessary for the flagger to stand in the traffic lane, the flagger may only stand near the center line and never cross it.
- When the flagger is satisfied that the drivers of all stopped vehicles are aware of his or her presence, the flagger should return to the shoulder of the road.
- To direct stopped traffic to proceed, remain at your station on the shoulder. If you’re in the stopped traffic lane, return to the shoulder.
- Face traffic and turn the Slow paddle to face traffic. Hold the Slow paddle in a stationary position with your arm extended horizontally away from your body.
- Do not wave the paddle around as it creates a confusing message.
- To alert or slow traffic, stand on the shoulder of the road and face traffic with the Slow sign paddle held in a stationary position with your arm extended horizontally away from your body.
- You may motion up and down with the free hand, palm down, indicating that the vehicle should slow down.
- Never stand in the path of oncoming traffic.
- At night, flagger stations should be well illuminated.
- The flagger shall wear reflective pants, and vest, shirt, or jacket, or other approved garment such as a jumpsuit.
- Reflective channelizing devices should also be used. In an emergency situation, a minimum size 24 inch by 24 inch red flag may be used instead of a paddle, until a paddle is available.

FINAL WORD

Flaggers have one of the most dangerous jobs in the country. Even if a flagger has the best training and is paying attention to what is going on around them at all times, they still put their lives in danger every day to direct traffic in work zones and make conditions safer for workers and drivers.