Flagger Safety Fatality File



In Washington State, a 42-year-old maintenance technician, who was performing the duties of a traffic control flagger, died when he was struck by a car at a highway work zone.

What Happened?

The flagger (the fatal victim) was working with a state maintenance team to install a new roadside information sign along a major two-lane state highway. The employer trained and certified their own flaggers.

The driver of a small passenger vehicle may have been distracted or was confused as she entered the work zone. The driver was not able to comprehend the flagger's instructions and drove her vehicle straight at the victim.

The vehicle struck the victim traveling at a reported speed of between 50 – 60 MPH. On impact, the victim struck the hood and windshield of the car, and then was thrown over the top of the vehicle before hitting the asphalt pavement along the highway. A witness who saw the incident immediately called 911 for emergency assistance.

Emergency personnel treated the victim on site. He died from his injuries during transport to a local medical facility.

To prevent future similar occurrences, the Washington State Fatality Assessment & Control Evaluation (FACE) investigative team concluded that similar operations working along highway and road construction work zones, should follow these guidelines:

- Use an alternative project plan and design options to perform road and highway work so flaggers are not used for traffic control.
- Employers should identify appropriate escape routes for flaggers and other workers in the event that a vehicle does not follow intended traffic controls.
- Employers should use positive protective barriers to shield workers from intruding vehicles.
- Employers should regularly train and supervise all workers regarding

specific hazards associated with work zones.
- Consider the use of law enforcement vehicles and personnel to help alert vehicle traffic to highway work zones.