Traffic Control (Flagger)



Key Takeaways:

- Understanding the importance of proper work methods, physical fitness, professionalism, and clothing regulations.
- Learning about the signs, barriers, flags, STOP/SLOW paddle, and lights for use at the work site.
- Learning where to position yourself for optimum safety, how to judge traffic speed and congestion, and regulate it accordingly.
- Observing common methods to communicate with other flaggers and the public.
- Learning about the various types of warning signs, channeling devices, and tapers and how they are set up.
- Recognizing the special equipment and precautions associated with night and freeway flagging.

Course Description

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that “Transportation incidents accounted for 76 percent of roadway work zone fatal occupational injuries in 2012. In 67 percent of these transportation incidents, a pedestrian worker was stuck by a vehicle.”

Flaggers, or traffic control specialists, are regularly exposed to one of the most hazardous, high-risk work environments: the American transportation infrastructure.

Frequently major road work is performed in the warm seasons, due to snow and winter moisture making road project completion difficult, but also at night, to inconvenience as few motorists as possible. However, these factors foster a dangerous environment for flaggers, but there are many other unpredictable elements that deserve heightened awareness and concern for personal safety.

Flaggers must be able to satisfactorily demonstrate the ability to:

- Receive and communicate specific instructions clearly, firmly and courteously.
- Move and maneuver swiftly to avoid danger from errant vehicles.
- Control signaling devices (like paddles and flags) to supply clear and positive guidance to drivers approaching a temporary traffic control (TTC)

zone in frequently changing situations.
- Comprehend and apply safe traffic control practices, sometimes in stressful or emergency situations.
- Watch for dangerous traffic situations and warn workers in sufficient time to avoid injury.

Typical Flagger Clothing

- Work boots
- Shirts with sleeves
- Long pants
- Sun protection (such as sunglasses and sunscreen)

Company Supplied Protective Equipment:

- Retro-reflective red-orange/yellow-green warning garment.
- Hard hats, white overalls and reflective gloves at night (if required by state standards).

In order to minimize the risk of accidents, it is critical that you are visible to on-coming traffic and that you stay out of the way of construction workers. It’s important that flaggers do not allow motorists or other workers to congregate around, and do not sit, lean, or lie on or in a vehicle; these actions decrease the visibility of road workers.

Positioning Yourself for Maximum Visibility

- Flagger stations are arranged depending on the speed of traffic and other factors affecting the visibility of the flagger.
- Prior to stopping traffic, stand on the shoulder of the road or in the closed lane.
- Ensure that you stand where there is a color contrast between you and your background, avoiding shaded areas.
- Ensure you stand alone, without others congregating around the flagger station.
- Adhere to any additional precautions determined by a competent person designated by the employer.

Ensuring Your Safety

- Post proper advance warning signs ahead of you prior to starting work at the flagger station.
- Maintain a clear workspace.
- Keep all personal belongings away from the work area.
- Keep distractions such as chairs or stereos out of the work area.

Often, an overlooked concern for flaggers is that once they report to each station, they will not be able to leave until properly relieved at set break times. Therefore, flaggers must ensure all questions are answered prior to taking a post, and that basics, like water, are there.

Ahead of leaving for break or at the end of each workday, flaggers must ensure they are properly relieved of their important duty. In the case that no other flagger will be relieving, workers need to cover, turn, or remove the “Flagger Ahead” signs.

Whenever a vehicle fails to stop, drop your stop/slow paddle and get out of the

way. Somehow alert others, possibly blow your whistle if you have one. For your safety, keep off the roadway until you get the traffic stopped.

Due to the importance of being able to judge the speed, volume, and stopping distances of traffic in a variety of situations, methods have been created to help you with these tasks. One example for spacing the flow of traffic is the Two Second Rule. This rule will give cars enough distance between them to safely stop, if needed. Here’s how the Two Second Rule works:
– Pick a marker, such as a pole, fence post, or particular barrier. After the rear bumper of one car passes the marker, begin counting to yourself and if the front bumper of the next car passes the marker before you are reach two, the cars are too close together and need to be slowed down.