

# FLAGGER SAFETY IN ROADWAY WORK ZONES



This talk discusses safe practices for flaggers who direct traffic around highway construction zones to protect themselves and safeguard other workers.

## Materials to have on hand:

- High-visibility apparel and personal protective equipment, or PPE, to be worn on the job
- SLOW/STOP paddles and flags used at the worksite

## Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- Where should you stand to direct traffic?
- What is the best signaling device to direct traffic around a work zone?

## TALK

Roadside construction work involves a number of serious hazards, from heavy machinery to nearby vehicle traffic. If you are a flagger at a construction site, you play a critical role in the safety of the other workers at the site.

Highway work zones are divided into five separate areas:

- First, there is the **advanced warning area**, where signs warn drivers about construction ahead.
- Next is the **transition area**, where drivers are redirected out of their normal path using a taper. This is where you will usually stand as a flagger.
- Third is the **buffer zone**, or the dead space between the transition area and the work area that is designed to provide added protection for construction workers.
- The **work area** is where the construction work is actually taking place. It has barriers to keep traffic out and protect the workers inside.
- Finally, the **termination area** is where drivers return to the regular roadway and resume normal driving speed.

Sometimes traffic can be controlled using signs and barricades, but flaggers are often needed in addition to these measures. If you are a flagger, always wear any personal protective equipment, or PPE, and safety apparel your employer requires. Generally, this will include high-visibility apparel, hard hats, and work boots. You will probably also have communication devices, such as a handheld radio, in addition to a horn or loud whistle to warn workers of approaching danger.

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**Talk Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor/** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Attendees:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# FLAGGER SAFETY IN ROADWAY WORK ZONES

When directing traffic around a work zone, a SLOW/STOP paddle is the best signaling device. Only use flags in emergency situations. Follow these steps to use the paddle safely:

- To stop traffic, face road users, and aim the STOP paddle toward approaching vehicles in a stationary position with your arm extended horizontally away from your body. Hold your free arm with the palm of your hand above shoulder level toward approaching traffic.
- To let traffic proceed, face road users with the SLOW paddle aimed toward approaching vehicles in a stationary position with your arm extended horizontally away from your body. Motion with your free hand for road users to proceed.
- To alert or slow traffic, face road users with the SLOW paddle aimed toward approaching traffic in a stationary position and your arm extended horizontally away from your body. Motion up and down with your free hand, palm down.

Always follow these safe work practices:

- Stand facing traffic, either on the shoulder next to the road or in the closed lane.
- Make sure you are clearly visible to the first approaching vehicle at all times.
- Position yourself far enough ahead of the work zone to warn workers of out-of-control vehicles and other approaching hazards.
- Only stand in the lane being used by moving vehicles after the vehicles have stopped.
- Always stand alone; don't allow other workers to gather around the flagging station.
- When working at night, make sure the flagging station is sufficiently lit up so that drivers can see it.

If you follow these precautions, you will both keep yourself safe on the job and protect your coworkers from traffic hazards while they work.