



Summertime and High Visibility Apparel

During summer in New Jersey, temperatures and humidity can soar, as can traffic. With that said, summer is no time to take a vacation from wearing high visibility apparel when working on or near roadways.

New Jersey has adopted the latest edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 edition. Section 6D.03 states:

Standard:

04 All workers, including emergency responders, within the right-of-way who are exposed either to traffic or to work vehicles and construction equipment within the TTC zone shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 publication entitled “American National Standard for High-Visibility Safety Apparel and Headwear” (see Section 1A.11), or equivalent revisions, and labeled as meeting the ANSI 107-2004 standard performance for Class 2 or 3 risk exposure, except as provided in Paragraph 5. A person designated by the employer to be responsible for worker safety shall make the selection of the appropriate class of garment.

Option:

05 Emergency and incident responders and law enforcement personnel within the TTC zone may wear high visibility safety apparel that meets the performance requirements of the ANSI/ISEA 207-2006 publication entitled “American National Standard for High-Visibility Public Safety Vests” (see Section 1A.11), or equivalent revisions, and labeled as ANSI 207-2006, in lieu of ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 apparel.

Standard:

06 When uniformed law enforcement personnel are used to direct traffic, to investigate crashes, or to handle lane closures, obstructed roadways, and disasters, high-visibility safety apparel as described in this Section shall be worn by the law enforcement personnel.

07 Except as provided in Paragraph 8, firefighters or other emergency responders working within the right-of-way shall wear high-visibility safety apparel as described in this Section.

Option:

08 Firefighters or other emergency responders working within the right-of-way and engaged in emergency operations that directly expose them to flame, fire, heat, and/or hazardous materials may wear retro-reflective turnout gear that is specified and regulated by other organizations, such as the National Fire Protection Association.

The message is clearly stated. New Jersey workers (whether Public Works, Utilities, Police, Fire, or EMS) must wear ANSI 107-2004 ed. (or 207-2006 ed. for emergency responders) Class 2 or 3 apparel when operating on or within 15 feet of a roadway. The only stated exception is when fighting a fire, as most ANSI 107 and 207 apparel are not rated for fire resistance. ANSI standards prescribe a certain amount of square inches of retro-reflective material. **Wearing a yellow or orange t-shirt without the required retro-reflective striping is no longer permitted for workers on roadways.**

That is the bad news. The good news is safety equipment manufacturers have greatly expanded their lines of apparel that meet the new standards. Class 2 and 3 apparel is now available in T-shirts, golf shirts, vests, rain gear and a large variety of jackets. The two main differences between Class 2 and Class 3 apparel is Class 3 increases the square inches of retro-reflective striping and adds striping on the sleeves. Class 2 apparel is appropriate for most daytime operations. Class 3 is needed for low visibility conditions (dusk / dawn, night, fog, rain, etc.), high speed or high volume roadways, and complex backgrounds. Color can be lime-yellow, orange, or a combination of the two colors. Striping is white.

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Supervisory Considerations

Department heads must plan for the many and varied conditions in which their employees must work. While a high-visibility vest which can be worn over work clothes or a uniform may meet the minimum standards of the MUTCD, employers should also recognize some challenges:

- *Will the same size vest fit over both summer clothing and winter outerwear?* Providing a XXL vest to fit over winter coats becomes an over-sized hazard in the summer. A Large vest in the summer will not fit over winter clothing.
- *Will the department provide both Class 2 and Class 3 vests to meet varying conditions?* How will workers be monitored to ensure they are using the correct vest under the conditions present? What will happen if conditions change in mid-shift? Would issuing only Class 3 apparel make compliance easier?

Many departments are issuing different high visibility apparel to meet their needs. For example, some public works have issued vests to be worn over department T-shirts as the workers found the striping imprinted on the T-shirts to be too hot. Other departments worked with their employees and alternately decided to purchase ANSI-rated T-shirts to eliminate the extra layer of clothing created by the vest.

Police departments face similar decisions. Will off-duty officers at road jobs wear their on-duty vests? Some have offered ANSI-rated high visibility golf shirts that can be worn on hot days to help ease heat stress of working on a road for a number of hours. Police command staff must also choose between ANSI 107 and ANSI 207 break-away vests for on- and off-duty assignments.

Regardless of the shirt(s), vest(s), or coat(s) provided by the department, supervisors should recognize the need for several other related policies and procedures:

- Employees must be trained when to wear the high-visibility apparel issued. Enforce the policy consistently.
- Work with employees to evaluate apparel selections. Employee buy-in, within regulatory guidelines, can greatly increase safety.
- Order appropriate sizes of safety apparel. Over-sized clothing creates a hazard. Under-sized clothing can also create a hazard.
- Workers must be constantly reminded to watch out for motorists. Our roadways are among the most congested in the nation. High visibility apparel is not a guarantee workers will be seen by motorists who are often distracted, impatient, inexperienced, or impaired. Crews working on roads must watch their backs and the backs of their co-workers.
- Working in hot weather can be aggravated with extra layers of safety apparel. Departments should consider extra precautions during periods of extreme weather including water, cooling, rest, work scheduling, and more. Remind workers often of the need to come to work hydrated. Playing catch-up is a dangerous game.
- Train workers to recognize the early signs of heat stress. They include headache or nausea, and pale, sweaty skin. This indicates the workers' cooling system is working properly (sweating), but may not be sufficient to adequately cool the person. 10 – 15 minutes of cooling and drinking water will usually alleviate the condition.

Later stages, called heat stroke, is characterized by confusion, disorientation, or unconsciousness, extremely elevated body temperature, and dry skin. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition and immediate care is required. Call 9-1-1. Aggressively cool the victim by fanning, spraying with water, etc. Administer CPR if the person stops breathing.

Summer in New Jersey presents hazards. But with planning, cooperation, and education, they can be controlled.

Be Safe