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Traffic Control by Law Enforcement in Work Zones

The Safety Directors' office would like to remind our law enforcement agencies of best practices for controlling traffic through work zones:

- On high volume or high speed roadways, a truck-mounted attenuator (TMA) should be a required piece of equipment.
- When a TMA is deployed at the work zone, the police cruiser should be positioned in front of the TMA, so the officer and vehicle are protected from on-coming traffic. Another option is to position the police vehicle off the roadway altogether. When positioning the police vehicle in front of the TMA, be mindful that part of the attenuation of a crash includes the TMA rolling forward several feet. Confirm the roll-forward distance with the TMA operator.
- The officer should limit the time sitting in the police vehicle as this is when they are the most vulnerable. When out of the vehicle, an ANSI Class 2 or 3 high visibility outer wear must be worn. The label should read "ANSI 107-2004 (or later) Class 2 or 3", or "ANSI 207-2009 Class 2 or 3".

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control specifies that temporary traffic control measures are the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency. As the officer on site, you have a responsibility to ensure that the measures being employed by the work crew are in line with the MUTCD. Verify that the following practices are occurring properly:

If the contractor has a flagging operation set up:

- Flaggers must use a STOP / SLOW paddle. Red flags and hand signals are only permitted for emergency (unanticipated) situations.

Even though law enforcement officers are permitted to use hand signals, we recommend a STOP / SLOW paddle be used as the paddle provides more definitive direction to the motorist.

- Flagger(s) must be positioned on the shoulders of the road, not on the center line. It is not uncommon to see the STOP / SLOW paddle placed in a cone on the center of the roadway and the flagger standing there to turn it back and forth. This is an incorrect and dangerous position for a flagger.

If traffic is allowed to self-regulate (no flaggers): Monitor traffic to ensure that conditions are appropriate for self-regulation; low speed, low volume, and good lines of sight to see on-coming traffic. If there are signs such as long back-ups, driver confusion, or screeching brakes, make the appropriate changes to correct the hazard.

Regardless of the traffic control measures being used, we suggest an officer drive through the work zone to see what the layout looks like to approaching motorists. Be mindful of curves, hills, sun glare, shadows and other conditions that could obstruct the view of drivers. This should be repeated periodically as traffic and environmental conditions change during the day.

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