MSI The MEL Safety Institute

Safety Director Bulletin

One in a series of safety bulletins from your Joint Insurance Fund

August 2016

Resources for School Crossing Guard Safety Programs

For police departments and crossing guards across New Jersey, August marks the start of the new school year. While children hurry to squeeze in more vacation, traffic safety officers hurry to inspect school zones and train crossing guards. The position of School Crossing Guard continues to be one of the most dangerous occupations in local government. Over the last decade, the accident rate for crossing guards has increased 65%. The Safety Director would like to remind our members of the available risk control resources to prepare for the coming school year.

MEL WEBSITE www.njmel.org

A good place to start is by visiting the MEL homepage. Under the SAFETY drop-down menu, chose CROSSING GUARDS.

Each year should begin with a review of the town's Crossing Guard policies and procedures, and a survey of guard posts for visual obstructions and glare. The MEL has developed two checklists to assist towns in their evaluations. They can be found on the bottom of the page, titled *Annual Crossing Guard Program Review*.

August is a good time to ramp up community awareness programs to safeguard the school crossing guard and the children they protect. Two videos are available for presentations to parent groups or other community gatherings:

- *Pedestrian Safety* – a 20-minute video discussing strategies a community can use to protect pedestrians
- *School Zone Safety* – an 11-minute video focusing on establishing effective controls in school zones

Also available on the page is a pamphlet titled, *Community Safety Leadership Guide for Crossing Guards* which offers guidance on establishing a Citizens Public Safety Advisory Committee, traffic calming strategies, physical qualifications for crossing guards and a sample press release.

Crossing guard training is the third activity that occurs during the month of August. Training for each school crossing guard should consist of at least two hours of annual classroom instruction and should include information on traffic control methods and the duties and responsibilities of adult school crossing guards. The MEL offers a model lesson plan to assist training officers. Select the *Annual Crossing Guard Training Plan* link on the page.

Informal training, or coaching, should occur during the year. Refer to the *Crossing Guard Job Site Observation* form which lists the best practices and common hazards to consider when making observations. It is a straight forward tool to document the police department's coaching efforts. Experienced guards should be observed at least once during each term. Less experienced guards, or posts with complex traffic situations, should be observed several times. The *Job Site Observation form* is posted on the MEL website.

At the bottom of the page, you will also find a quick link to the many resources available at the *Rutgers Crossing Guard Project*.

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877-398-3046.

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Key Points to Emphasize During Training and Job Site Observations:

Do:

- The acceptable technique for guards to use in stopping traffic is the "gap" method which requires waiting for an adequate spacing [gap] between a line of cars. This method is safer because it allows the guard more time to enter the roadway and initiate a stop of traffic.
- Proceed cautiously into the crosswalk as you alert motorists to stop. The guard should attempt to make eye contact with the approaching driver. This eye contact is important because it re-enforces the guard's intention to the driver and helps assure that the guard has been seen by the driver. A driver not paying attention to the surroundings will usually not make this eye contact, thus alerting the guard that the driver may not be prepared to stop.
- Be alert. Don't assume a vehicle will stop just because you're holding a STOP sign. Watch out for passing or turning vehicles.
- Be aware that larger vehicles require longer distances to stop safely. Give vehicles more time to stop during wet and icy conditions.
- Hold up your STOP sign until you and the children have cleared the crosswalk.
- Use hand signals for motorists and verbal signals for children.

Don't:

- Direct traffic (Unless specifically trained to do so)
- Override a traffic signal

N.J. Safe Routes to School & Crossing Guards **www.njcrossingguards.org**

Rutgers University along with the New Jersey Department of Transportation and Division of Highway Traffic Safety with funding from the MEL developed a comprehensive risk control plan and a list of resources to protect children and school crossing guards.

The Rutgers University's Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and Civic Eye Collaborative created the training video, *Crosswalk Heroes*, to teach best practices and techniques for crossing children. The video can be shown during training sessions by selecting the blue VIDEOS tab from the above website.

Under the LAWS AND GUIDANCE tab are links to the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), N.J. PEOSHA Department of Health standards, the "Stop and Stay Stopped" Law, and N.J.S.A. Titles 39 and 40A statutes pertaining to crossing guards and school zones.

Requirements in the MUTCD and N.J.S.A. 40A:9-154.3 require guards to wear ANSI 107-2004 (or later) Class 2 or 3 high visibility apparel, a badge, and an identifying uniform and hat. They must use a retroreflective STOP paddle. Whistles are also considered a best practice to gain the attention of children at noisy intersections. Along with whistles, towns are also encouraged to consider high visibility gloves and even traction cleats as slips and falls are the leading type of injury to crossing guards.

Under the TOOLS tab you can find a sample job description with medical examination recommendations, the model policy and the *Crossing Guard Training Manual*. There is also an alternative *Crossing Guard Observation Report*.

Police departments must take a leadership role in addressing pedestrian safety. Consistent enforcement of traffic and pedestrian safety laws can reduce accidents. Communities should have a reputation for strictly enforcing traffic laws such as speeding as well as distracted and impaired driving.

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