

New York State Public Entities Safety Group 497

Safety Agenda

___ Chief, Fire Department
___ Site Administrators
___ Commissioners
___ Human Resources
___ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
___ Elected Officials

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Traffic Control for All Comers

Whether you are responsible for safety at road work zone sites, or for safety and control of traffic at fire sites, there are some basic flagging operations that should be followed. The spring season especially expands the hazards for road crews as they begin the road repair season. Some principles to keep in mind:

1. A Stop/Slow paddle should be used. Paddles should be at least 18" square (24" in high speed areas) and the staff should be at least 5' in length.
2. Flags are o.k. for emergencies and special situations. They should be at least 24" square, red in color, and of solid material.
3. All flaggers should be trained and relieved periodically.
4. Flaggers should wear good quality orange vests and hard hats, reflectorized at night or on cloudy days.
5. The flagger station should be isolated from operations and other workers.
6. The flagger station should be a good sight distance and should be lighted at night.
7. The flagger should have an adequate escape path.
8. The flagger should be positioned at the edge line as traffic approaches.
9. The flagger should maintain eye contact until the vehicle is stopped.
10. There should be a flagger sign positioned in advance of flaggers and removed promptly when not needed.
11. The distance from the flagger sign and the flagger should be maintained as work progresses.
12. On high speed roads, additional warning signs should be positioned to slow traffic prior to the flagger.
13. Lighted wands and flares for emergencies should be provided on site.

Divers Beware

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has issued a warning to fire fighters about the hazards present in training dives. Fire fighters who participate in dive training risk lung damage, illness and drowning. NIOSH investigated fatalities that occurred during training exercises and developed recommendations to decrease these risks. NIOSH recommends that fire departments:

- Establish, implement, and enforce standard operating procedures (SOPs) for diver training.
- Ensure that divers maintain positive communication with each other and the surface.
- Develop a pre-dive checklist.
- Ensure that backup divers are trained to perform rescue operations.
- Ensure that an experienced backup diver and a ninety-percent-ready diver are in position to help.
- Provide divers with refresher training on the hazards and prevention measures of lung overexpansion injuries, entanglement, decompression, and panic attacks.
- Practice the training exercise in a closed environment such as a swimming pool.
- Obtain and update appropriate medical fitness evaluations for SCUBA divers annually.
- Ensure that equipment checks are performed on a scheduled basis and defective equipment is repaired or replaced before a dive takes place.
- Supply divers with an alternative backup air source.
- Ensure that instructors and divers are certified for SCUBA diving.
- Ensure that a medical unit is on site with oxygen.
- Ensure that dive coordinators stay informed about each diver's rate of air consumption.

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Fire fighters/divers should do the following:

- Follow all SOPs
- Maintain continuous visual, verbal, or physical contact with their dive partner.
- Perform equipment checks before each dive. They should be verified by the dive coordinator.
- Ensure that underwater search teams operate individually to avoid rope entanglement.
- Regularly monitor their air consumption.
- Consider performing at least 12 dives per year to maintain skills.

Slip and Fall Prevention

Slips and falls are the most common causes of injuries on the job. As such, their prevention deserves a fresh look from time to time.

The most effective strategy for reducing the number of slips and falls is good housekeeping. Good housekeeping is more than a good appearance – it is keeping everything where it belongs and not allowing anything to be where it does not belong. This is especially true of tools, cords, water, ice, oil, books, pencils, hand trucks, carts, etc. When any of these items are left where they do not belong, like in a walking aisle, someone can slip, trip, fall and get injured. A good safety rule is that if you drop it, pick it up – now. Don't wait. If you have finished with it, put it away.

The second strategy is based on the understanding that everyone in the organization is responsible for the safety of self and co-workers. If you find a potential slip and fall condition that can be corrected immediately, correct it. If not, warn your fellow employees by posting signs while someone gets help.

Use good equipment arrangement and placement of material. Don't overload anything that can be transported. Overloading makes material harder to transport but easier to dump.

When you are using a cart, make sure the wheels are in good shape and watch where you are going. Check the floor for obstructions.

Wear safe footwear – the right type of soles, with low heels. Keep non-slip floor mats in traffic areas and constantly wet areas to provide better traction.

Walk, don't run. Never make a sudden direction change on a slippery surface.

Slip and Fall Inspection Checklist

1. Are floors clean, dry as possible and free of holes, protrusions and other walking hazards?
2. Are passageways clear of floor and obstructions which could cause a trip and fall?
3. Are floor openings such as holes and pits provided with covers and standard guardrails and four-inch toe boards?
4. Are stair rails provided with stairs with four or more risers?
5. Are all straight ladders and extension ladders provided with non-slip feet?
6. Are all ladders frequently inspected on a regular basis for serviceability? Are all ladders provided with steps and rings 12' apart?
7. Are hoses, electrical cords, telephone cords, or other obstructions allowed to remain across walk areas or work areas?
8. Are custodial carts and equipment arranged in such a way so as not to create a traffic hazard?
9. Are parking areas free from rocks, loose sand, debris, holes, projections, etc. that could cause a tripping accident?
10. Are entrance doors to buildings, offices and other areas in good working order?
11. Is lighting adequate in all hallways, stairwells and doorways?
12. Is carpeting securely fastened to the floor, including binding strips?
13. Do mats or other types of protection lie flat and free from tripping hazards?
14. Are there any other areas where mats should be provided?

