

HIGH-VISIBILITY APPAREL IN THE SUMMER BEST PRACTICES

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

New Jersey adopts the latest (2009) edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). 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.*

New Jersey workers must wear ANSI 107 (or ANSI 207 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. **Wearing a yellow or orange t-shirt without the required retro-reflective striping is not permitted for workers on roads.**

Safety equipment manufacturers have greatly expanded their lines of apparel that meet the new standards. Class 2 and 3 apparel is available in T-shirts, golf shirts, rain gear, and jackets. The difference 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. Low visibility conditions (dusk/dawn, night, fog, rain, etc.), high speed or high volume roadways, and complex backgrounds require Class 3 apparel.

Agency Leaders

Leaders must plan for the many 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 clothing? Providing an XXL vest to fit over winter clothing becomes an oversized hazard in the summer and a large vest in the summer will not fit over winter clothing.
- Will the department provide Class 2 and Class 3 vests to meet varying conditions? How will workers be monitored to ensure they use the correct vest under the present conditions? 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 departments have given 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.

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

- Train employees when to wear high-visibility apparel and enforce the policy consistently.
- Work with employees to evaluate apparel selections. Employee buy-in within regulatory guidelines can significantly increase safety.
- Order appropriate sizes of safety apparel because oversized clothing creates a hazard and under-sized clothing can also create a risk to the employee.
- 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 a worker 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 schedule, 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 signs of heat-related illnesses. They include headache or nausea and pale, sweaty skin. Sweating indicates the worker's internal cooling system is working but may not be sufficient to cool the person adequately. 10 – 15 minutes of cooling and drinking water should alleviate the condition. For additional resources, please review the [J.A. Montgomery Safety Director Bulletin - Heat Related Illnesses Best Practices](#).

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