

MOBILE WORK ZONES TEMPORARY TRAFFIC BEST PRACTICES

November and December is leaf collection season in many towns. Leaf collection is typically classified as a mobile work zone, as is sanitation bulk pick-up, hot/cold patching, and jetting / vacuuming catch basins. As we move into winter, plowing snow and spreading salt/brine are two more examples of mobile work zones. Now is a good time to remind employees of these seasonal tasks' regulations and safety considerations.

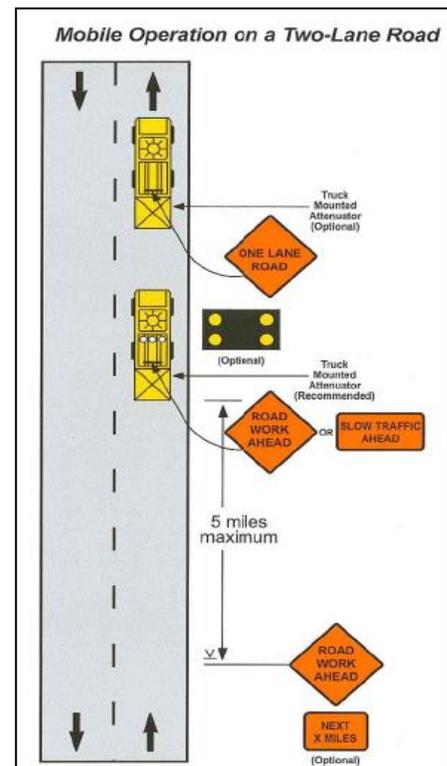
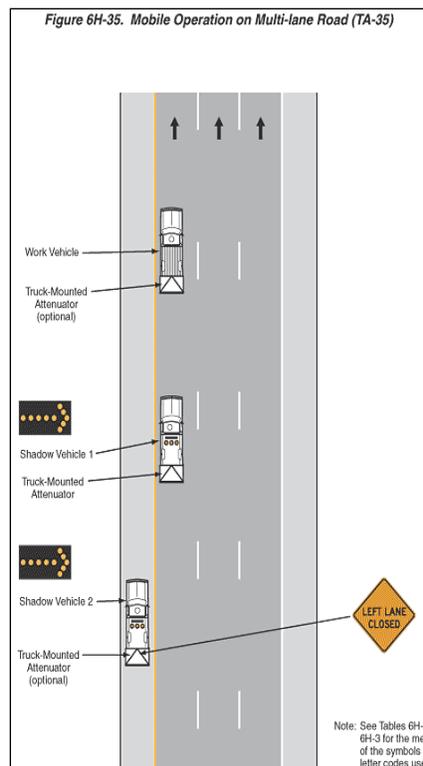
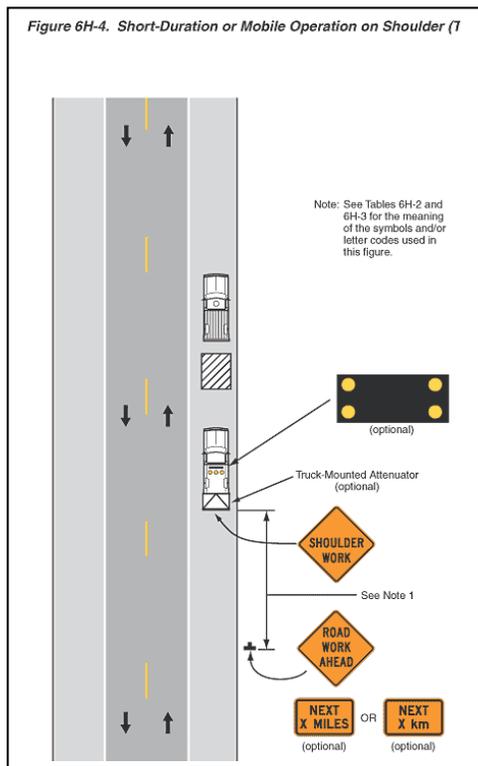
The [2009 edition of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#) is the law in New Jersey when working on or near roadways. Supervisors and workers must be aware of the requirements in this document. Part 6 on Temporary Traffic Control is the standard when conducting routine tasks, whether road repair or maintenance, utility work, or any other work within 15 feet of a road. Part 6 defines a 'Mobile Work Zone' as an operation that "moves intermittently or continuously." Typically, 15 minutes is considered the duration of a stop before the operation becomes a 'Short Duration Work Zone', and those rules apply.

Safety in mobile operations must not be compromised by using fewer warning devices simply because the operation will frequently change its location. According to the MUTCD, devices having greater mobility might be necessary, such as signs mounted on trucks or larger, more visible signs that can be used effectively and economically. Additional guidance from the MUTCD includes:

- Workers must wear ANSI Class 2-2004 or later high-visibility apparel. Class 3 is recommended when there is high speed, high-volume traffic, or low visibility (rain, snow, fog, dusk/dawn, etc.).
- Warning signs, arrow/message boards, flags, and channelizing devices may be used but should be moved periodically to keep them near the mobile work area.
- Work vehicles must have high-intensity rotating/strobe amber warning lights visible from both directions. **The four-way hazard lights of a vehicle MAY NOT be used in place of high-intensity amber lights.** Vehicles may be augmented with signs or arrow panels.
- Flaggers may be used for mobile operations that involve frequent short stops. Flaggers must use a STOP/SLOW paddle. Only properly equipped and trained flaggers should direct traffic.
- When mobile operations are performed, a shadow vehicle equipped with an arrow panel or a sign may follow the work vehicle(s), **especially when vehicular traffic speeds or volumes are high.** Where feasible, warning signs may be placed along the roadway and moved periodically as the work progresses.

Some additional considerations:

- The above are **MINIMUM STANDARDS**. Agencies must use good judgment and local knowledge when establishing traffic control for temporary work zones.
- Workers and supervisors must receive training on setting up temporary traffic control in accordance with the MUTCD. The NJCE JIF offers multiple courses to help train employees on these topics. Visit the NJCE.org website (Safety Tab) to view the [Live Monthly Training Schedules](#) for dates, times and registration links.



The three figures above and Notes below are taken from *Section 6H - Typical Applications* of the MUTCD. They should be considered the minimum standards for worker and motorist safety. However, New Jersey is one of the most densely populated states, and our roadways are some of the most heavily traveled. Minimum standards may not be sufficient for many operations.

NOTES:

1. For low-volume, low-speed conditions, a shadow vehicle may not be practical. The shadow vehicle should be used for high-volume or high-speed conditions.
2. Shadow vehicles are used to warn traffic of the operation ahead. The distance between the work and shadow vehicles may vary according to terrain, speed limit, and other factors. A truck-mounted attenuator (TMA) may be used on the shadow vehicle and work vehicle.
3. Work and shadow vehicles shall display rotating or strobe lights, both forward and to the rear. **If a vehicle is equipped with an arrow panel, it SHALL ONLY be used in the CAUTION mode on two-lane operations.**
4. Vehicle-mounted signs shall be mounted with the bottom of the sign at a minimum height of 4 feet above the pavement. The sign shall be covered or turned from view when work is not in progress.
5. Where practical and when needed, the work and shadow vehicles should pull over to allow traffic to pass. If this cannot be done, a "DO NOT PASS" sign may be placed on the rear of the vehicle blocking the lane.
6. If a shadow vehicle is not used, ground-mounted signs should provide a warning for the mobile operation. Where speed or volumes are high, advanced warning signs are strongly encouraged.

Agency Managers should seek efficient ways to protect their employees operating on or near roadways beyond the minimum standards.