

Crossing Guard Safety – a Recent Reminder

It can seem almost a routine role – the school crossing guard. It is not and we have a reminder of it from early February when a law enforcement officer was struck within a marked crosswalk adjacent to a middle school, a split second after she pushed a student out of the way of the on-coming vehicle.

The [video](#) can be a bit disturbing, but spoiler alert, the officer did not receive life-threatening injuries and is back at work. Appropriately, the Town of North East (Cecil County, Maryland) awarded the officer a commendation and Governor Hogan presented her with a governor’s citation, “for her incredible act of heroism.”



The 20-30 seconds of video make for a good tailgate safety talk for anyone acting in the capacity of a crossing guard or in any way directing traffic. If you watch the video, you will see Cpl. Annette Goodyear (North East Police Department) in the marked crosswalk in front of the North East Middle School during the morning commute. She is clad in bright orange rain gear and makes several exaggerated hand gestures to on-coming traffic, indicating stop. Nonetheless, as a student nears the middle of the marked crosswalk, the on-coming car does not stop, Cpl. Goodyear pushes the student out of the path, and a split second later she herself is struck by the vehicle. She lands, attempts to get up, but then is clearly injured on the ground as several people rush to her side. While she was injured in her lower extremities, Cpl. Goodyear is back at work and luckily, her injuries were not life-threatening.

But we all know they could have been. A slight shimmy in time or space and she may have been killed. The student also received only a very minor injury to her hand, but she too could have been a statistic had it not been for the quick and selfless action of the officer and just a split second of luck.

We don’t know all the circumstances, but clearly the driver was in some way distracted. It is impossible to imagine she did not see the (guessing) 5’-8” Cpl. Goodyear dressed as the world’s largest traffic cone in the middle of the street making exaggerated stop motions. We can only be glad that she wasn’t driving faster than she was, since we know that there is a substantially greater likelihood of a fatality between a vehicle driving 35-mph and one driving 25-mph.

What can we learn from this incident? Local agencies often have numerous employees and volunteers that direct traffic in various roles. As in this case,



they may be law enforcement personnel. In others, they may be paid or volunteer crossing guards. And, operations and maintenance personnel work routinely within the right-of-way, including the travel way, on a regular basis.

Whenever operating in the right-of-way, heightened vigilance, high visibility, and training are a must. We cannot take for granted that drivers will be focused on the road, that they will be operating within the speed limit, that they will be operating properly maintained vehicles, or that they are operating without the influence of drugs or alcohol. Knowing the standards and completing training are the first steps.

We can learn a lot by consulting [Chapter 7D](#) of the Delaware Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which contains some guidance and requirements for Crossing Supervision. First, adult crossing guards should be selected based on the qualifications enumerated in Section 7D.03 of the MUTCD.

Next, “crossing guards and law enforcement officers performing school crossing supervision shall wear high-visibility retroreflective safety apparel labeled as ANSI 107-2004 standard performance for Class 2” (emphasis added). Bright orange or yellow clothing alone does not meet ANSI standards and retroreflective elements are required to comply with the MUTCD.

Even in the daytime? Yes.

Even for law enforcement officers? Yes.

Surely, we can all see how much greater exposed Cpl. Goodyear would have been, had she been dressed only in her black uniform. If you are in the street directing traffic and aren't at least clad in ANSI Class 2, it's time to up your game.

Adult crossing guards shall use a STOP paddle. This should not be confused with the STOP/SLOW paddle used by flaggers. The adult crossing guard STOP paddle is octagonal in shape, at least 18” in size and says STOP on both sides. It shall be retroreflectorized or illuminated when used during hours of darkness.

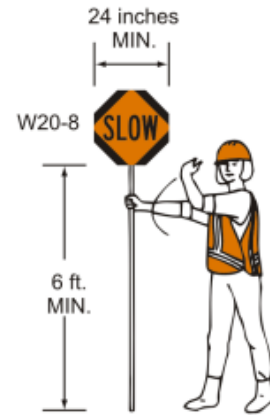


Also in Delaware, “adult crossing guards at signalized intersections should utilize existing pedestrian pushbutton controls and should not manually control traffic movements at the traffic signal.”

Changing gears to those who are flaggers for temporary traffic control or work zones, the MUTCD has separate requirements and guidance in [Part 6E](#). Notably, the Delaware MUTCD requires that “all flaggers working on state-maintained roadways, except for emergency personnel and law enforcement officers, shall be certified by a DelDOT-recognized flagger certification program. All flaggers, except for emergency personnel and law enforcement officers, shall be required to carry a flagger certification card and photo identification on their person at all times.”

Also in Delaware, “For daytime and nighttime activity, flaggers shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets or exceeds the Performance Class 3 requirements of the ANSI/ISEA 107–2004 publication entitled “American National Standard for High-Visibility Apparel and Headwear” (see Section 1A.11) and labeled as meeting the ANSI 107-2004 standard performance for Class 3 risk exposure” (emphasis added).

The hand-signaling device of the flagger is different than for an adult crossing guard. For Delaware flaggers, the STOP/SLOW paddle is octagonal in shape and is 24” in size with 8” lettering. The STOP face is the same as the R-1 Stop Sign and the SLOW face has black lettering and a black border on an orange background.



These are only excerpts of the Delaware MUTCD and anyone providing crossing supervision or acting as a flagger should know and understand the relevant portions of the MUTCD, attend any training required, and obtain certificates as necessary before taking on these responsibilities.

As drivers, the February incident should be a wake-up call, even if we think we are model drivers. We cannot afford to be texting, reading, making phone calls, or otherwise be distracted while we are driving. Speed limits are not guidelines, and we need to obey them. We cannot be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In school zones and other pedestrian and bike-rich areas, we need to be hyper-vigilant. Imagine what the next several decades of your life would be for you, as you replayed the moment in your head when you struck someone with your vehicle due to your own negligence.

The muscle memory of training kicked in for Cpl. Goodyear and for that this student may owe her life. We are thankful that the incident ended as well as it did, but if we ignore the example, we may witness a worse incident in our own community. Instead, let us recommend that you use the example to elevate the situational awareness of all those in your community that provide traffic control in the right-of-way.