

School Crossing Safety Program and the 4 E's

"It was raining really hard and visibility wasn't great, and I saw her step off the curb and I slammed on the brakes... I couldn't stop, and it went right over her."

News article quoting an SUV driver who struck and killed a NJ crossing guard

Over a period of 15 years, 14 NJ adult crossing guards were killed and 121 suffered serious injuries when struck by motor vehicles. To address these alarming statistics, use the four E's: Evaluation, Engineering, Education and Enforcement.

EVALUATION

Each year should start with a review of the town's Crossing Guard policies, procedures, posts, and equipment. Recently, the MEL sent each police department a training video, "Pedestrian Safety – Walk the Walk", to help identify potential hazards to pedestrians in their communities. The MEL has also developed two checklists to assist towns in their evaluations.

- Annual Review of School Crossing Guard Program & Posts - suggested to be used during the summer to inspect and prepare your program and guard posts for the coming school year.
- Job Site Observation for Crossing Guards - each guard should be observed at least once during their term. Newer guards or complex posts should be observed several times.

Available at www.njmel.org – Safety / Crossing Guards / Checklists

Adult school crossing guards' appointment, term, qualifications, and supervision requirements are given in N.J.S.A. 40A:9-154, available at <http://nj.gov/health/surv/documents/njac40a9.pdf>. Municipalities are encouraged to develop written job descriptions which include minimum physical requirements to perform the core functions of the job. The MEL guidelines for visual and hearing acuity are available at www.njmel.org – Safety / Crossing Guards / Medical Examinations for Crossing Guards.

ENGINEERING

The new video "Pedestrian Safety – Walk the Walk", also discusses engineering improvements which can be made to reduce pedestrian accidents. For example, researchers have determined that merely painting cross walks is not effective by itself. A community must go beyond painting lines. Coupling crosswalks with pedestrian crossing signs is more effective in alerting motorists. At a minimum, all school crossing stations should have these signs. They are also useful in congested business zones.



New requirements in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, now require guards to wear ANSI 107-2004 (or later) Class 2 or 3 high visibility apparel. They must also use a retroreflective STOP paddle. Towns are also encouraged to consider high visibility gloves, whistles, and even ice shoes. Wearing a hat gives a guard a

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more official appearance and can enhance his or her visibility, as well as protect the guard from the sun, cold, and rain. Whistles may help a guard gain the attention of children at noisy intersections.

EDUCATION

Every adult school crossing guard is required to be trained. Such training shall consist of:

- Minimum of two hours of classroom instruction (annually) which shall include information on methods of traffic control along with the duties and responsibilities of adult school crossing guards.
- Minimum of 20 hours of training under the direction of an experienced crossing guard or police officer.



The MEL's three safety training videos can be used to supplement your annual training. These videos have been distributed to each community's police department and are available at www.njmel.org.

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. The practice of stepping off the sidewalk and abruptly stopping traffic should be avoided at all times. Abruptly stopping traffic could cause rear end collisions. Vehicles may not be able to stop short and could strike the guard.

When standing in position the guard should attempt to make eye contact with the approaching driver. This eye contact is important in that it re-enforces the guard's intention to the driver and helps provide an indication to the guard that the driver is aware of the guard's intentions. 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.

Key Points to Emphasize During Training:

Do:

- Proceed cautiously into the crosswalk as you alert motorists to stop
- Be alert. Don't assume a vehicle will stop just because you're holding a STOP sign
- Give vehicles more time to stop during wet and icy conditions
- Watch out for passing or turning vehicles
- Be aware that larger vehicles require longer distances to stop safely
- 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

ENFORCEMENT

The final E is Enforcement. Police departments must take a leadership role in addressing pedestrian safety. Consistent enforcement of traffic and pedestrian safety laws significantly reduces accidents. Your community should have a reputation for strictly enforcing traffic laws such as speeding as well as distracted and impaired driving.