

## FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-10

### ISSUE:    HIGHWAY TRAFFIC CONTROL

Firefighters performing firefighting and rescue extrications on highways and roadways are in risk of serious injury. It is important to provide emergency workers with as safe a working area as reasonably possible. Inter-departmental responses (Mutual Aid/ Automatic Aid) should be pre-planned to deal with traffic issues in a consistent manner.

To ensure firefighter safety, the following precautions should be taken:

- Firefighters required to use traffic control stop or slow signs should receive the appropriate training to do so.
- Employers need to develop and communicate to firefighters a written guideline on safety precautions to follow when exposed to potential hazards from vehicular traffic.
- The Incident Commander is responsible for implementing department guidelines to establish a safe working area.
- The safe working area should be established in co-ordination with the police Incident Commander whenever possible.
- Leave red emergency lights on in accordance with Part X of the Highway Traffic Act (HTA).

Highways with **speeds greater than 90 km/h**:

- On major highways, particularly 400 series, highway emergency vehicles should block one more lane of traffic than needed during emergency operations. It is recommended that safety cones should not be deployed on highways with speed limits greater than 90 km/h.
- To protect the safety of firefighters, firefighters **are not** to use a “traffic control stop or slow sign” outlined in Part X subsection 146.1 of the HTA on highways with speed limits greater than 90 km/h. The Ministry of Transportation has advised that the traffic control stop or slow sign is **not permitted** to be used on any roadway where the posted speed limit is greater than 90km/h.
- Emergency vehicles (e.g. pumpers, tankers, aerials) being used as “blockers” should be placed at least 30 metres from the actual working area with the front wheels turned, so as to direct the vehicle off the roadway and not forward into the safety zone if hit from behind.
- Personnel are expected to stay behind the blocker apparatus and within the safety zone provided.

- Never cross high-speed traffic lanes on foot for any purpose. Reposition apparatus instead, or call for additional apparatus that can respond to the proper location.
- Firefighters should exit fire apparatus on the untravelled side of traffic flow, whenever possible.

**Roadways with speeds of 90 km/h or less:**

- Fire departments may choose to use HTA Part X subsection 146.1 to allow firefighters to use traffic control stop or slow signs to direct traffic on roadways with speeds of 90 km/h or less. Signs provided must meet the criteria outlined in Regulation 615 Signs made under the HTA.
- Firefighters who are directing traffic using a traffic control stop or slow sign are not to perform any other work while directing traffic.
- When an incident is of a nature that firefighters will be laying hose or otherwise working on the roadway, apparatus should be positioned to provide a safe work zone for the firefighters, until police or the road authority assume traffic control.
- Where apparatus will be parked without protection of a “blocker”, vehicle traffic cones should be used by apparatus operators to control traffic flow around the parked vehicle, giving enough room for a walkable safety zone around the vehicle.

The following additional issues should be considered when developing SOPs/OGs:

- The police service responding to the serviced area should be consulted in the development of departmental procedures.
- Delaying traffic unnecessarily can result in secondary incidents; therefore firefighters should move non-emergency operations off the travelled portion of highways as soon as possible.
- In prolonged incidents, it is recommended that the local road authority be contacted to provide “blockers”.

**Note:** Section 134(2) of the HTA permits only police officers to close a highway.

**High Visibility Safety Apparel**

High visibility safety apparel should be worn by firefighters who may be endangered by vehicular traffic. The firefighter(s) who are controlling traffic by the use of traffic control stop or slow signs are required to wear high visibility safety apparel while performing this work. Personnel working within a safe zone established by blocker apparatus or police do not require vests. Personnel wearing self contained breathing apparatus or other specialized PPE such as

Hazmat suits do not require safety vests but must be protected within a safe zone established by blocker apparatus or police.

Note: Most bunker gear does not meet the reflectivity performance requirements of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard Z96-09 High-Visibility Safety Apparel.

The Ministry of Labour accepts high visibility safety apparel that meets the performance requirements under the CSA Z96-09 standard for both the background materials and the stripes/bands. The following classes and colours of high visibility safety apparel comply with CSA Z96-09:

## **CLASSES**

### **Daytime**

CSA Z96-09 Class 2, Level 2 (minimum)

### **Night time**

CSA Z96-09 Class 2, Level 2 (minimum) and horizontal stripes/bands that encircle both arms and both legs not less than 5 centimetres away from the wrist or ankle or Class 3, Level 2 .

### **Special Cases:**

Fire Resistant Applications (Only) CSA Z96-09 Level FR

## **COLOURS**

### **Fluorescent Background Material**

Fluorescent yellow-green

Fluorescent orange-red

Fluorescent red

### **Bright Background Material**

Bright yellow-green

Bright orange-red

## **Label Requirements**

All high visibility CSA Z96-09 safety apparel must comply with the labelling requirements under the standard.

Ministry of Labour Inspectors can check the label to ensure that the apparel complies with the above class and level performance requirements.

**NOTE:**

High Visibility garments that comply with the previous CSA Z96 standard are considered acceptable if in good condition, however, when old high visibility garments are replaced, they should be replaced with high visibility garments that meet the current CSA Z96-09 standard.