



USE OF TRAFFIC LOOKOUTS IN WORK ZONES

A. INTRODUCTION

A traffic lookout is a worker that is assigned to the sole purpose of watching for errant vehicles entering the workspace. If a vehicle appears to be entering the workspace the lookout will yell or sound an alarm to instruct the workers to move out of way of the errant vehicle.

B. OBJECTIVE

- To protect the safety of workers from errant vehicles entering the work activity area.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

C.1. ADVANTAGES

- Does not rely on electronics for monitoring that have the possibility of failure or false alarms.
- An easy-to-implement safety measure.

C.2. DISADVANTAGES

- Human error comes into factor and relies on the lookout person to be attentive.
- Construction cost increases from having a worker on site that does no physical work.

C.3. OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES

- The use of traffic lookouts is not mentioned in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.



D. DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

The following guidelines were taken for the most part from Caltrans' Maintenance Manual chapter 8 (Protection of Workers), and were combined with specification 1-10.2 (Traffic Control Management Section 2) from The Washington Department of Transportation.

- **A traffic lookout should be assigned if all of these conditions exist: (a) work occurs on a roadway with a speed limit of 55 mph or more; (b) workers are without physical protection; (c) work takes place within 30 feet of moving traffic; and (d) a worker is on foot.**
- **A lookout shall not be assigned to any other duties.**
- A traffic lookout should be posted at location where he or she can detect errant drivers or other hazards and provide an effective warning to other workers.
- Lookout observation locations should not be allowed where the lookout person will be placed under unnecessary danger.
- The lookout should continuously watch approaching traffic for errant vehicles that may intrude in the workspace area.
- If trouble is suspected, the lookout should warn the workers by shouting or using an audible handheld alarm capable of communicating the warning message. This warning is intended to give the workers the time to use a planned route to avoid the errant vehicle.
- The lookout should warn workers who unintentionally step out of the protected workspace area.
- The lookout person should be a certified flagger.
- Traffic lookouts should be rotated often to keep them alert.
- If a handheld warning alarm is used, it should be clipped to the lookout's belt to make the device immediately available in an emergency.
- Workers being protected by the human lookout should plan their escape route in advance.



- As directed by the engineer, any crew member may be used whenever he or she thinks that a lookout person is needed.
- At night, visibility is substantially reduced, and thus, a traffic lookout may be used to improve the safety of nighttime work zone operations.
- Even if workers are physically protected, using a lookout may be beneficial.
- Electrical and mechanical systems may be used to supplement the human lookout.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this section of the Maryland State Highway Administration's Work Zone Safety Tool Box is only to provide guidance. The Work Zone Safety Tool Box supplements current practices and standards provided in the current edition of the following documents:

- 1) The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
- 2) The Maryland Supplement to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- 3) Maryland State Highway Administration Standard Sign Book
- 4) Maryland State Highway Administration Book of Standards for Highway and Incidental Structures
- 5) Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration Standard Specifications for Construction and Materials

E. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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2. Washington Department of Transportation (2004). Specification 1-10.2 Traffic Control Management Section 2. [<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/eesc/design/projectdev/gsp/gsp/pdf/10ap1.pdf>]. Accessed October 2004.
3. Bryden, J. (2003). Traffic Control Handbook for Mobile Operations at Night. Report FHWA-SA-03-026. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D.C.
4. Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways, 2003 Edition, Revision 1. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation, Washington, D.C.
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6. Bryden, J. and Mace, D. (2002). Guidelines for Design and Operation of Nighttime Traffic Control for Highway Maintenance and Construction. NCHRP Report 476. Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C.