

Safety at the Roadside: What Workers Need to Know

This guide deals with traffic and vehicle hazards in roadside work zones. You will also need to consider hazards associated with your specific work activities.

Understand the hazards

Working close to traffic is dangerous. Each roadside work site has its own unique set of hazards. Make sure your employer or supervisor has informed you of the hazards at your work site before beginning work.

Be aware that the types of hazards can change over the course of your work shift.

Traffic volumes can increase, for example, or changing light levels can reduce visibility.

Potential hazards around the work site

- Take note of any work vehicles or mobile equipment
- Take note of any overhead cables, railway crossings or rights-of-way.
- Be aware of other roadside work or traffic control going on nearby.

Potential hazards on the road

- Be aware if you are working near an intersection with traffic coming from multiple directions.
- Measure how much space you have between your work site and the roadway. Be aware of your location vis-à-vis traffic, cyclists, and pedestrians as you work.
- Be aware of the visibility of approaching drivers. Check to see if there are any curves, crests of hills, trees and bushes, or parked vehicles.

- Take note of any overhead cables, railway crossings, or rights-of-way.
- Be aware of other roadside work or traffic control going on nearby.

Potential traffic hazards

- Be aware of the type of traffic that is passing by – passenger vehicles, buses, large trucks.
- Large vehicles such as commercial trucks are often wider than normal vehicles and may have protruding side mirrors.
- Be aware of vehicles travelling faster than the speed limit.
- Identify any cycle lanes. What is the volume of cyclists?

Look at the local area

- Be aware of delivery vehicles, buses, or other vehicles that may periodically block signage or reduce road width.
- Identify any traffic entering or exiting nearby commercial premises that could block signage or obstruct visibility of you or your co-workers.
- Consider any police, ambulance, or fire stations you should be aware of.

Look at pedestrians

- Be aware of any pedestrian traffic near your work site. Is there a clear path for pedestrians to travel safely, including those with mobility issues such as the elderly or disabled?

- Be aware of any children in the vicinity. Identify nearby schools, parks, playgrounds, etc.

Look at the environment

- Consider if the weather may impact visibility for drivers (e.g., fog, heavy rain).
- Be aware of the condition of the roads. Are they slick or slippery?
- Be aware of any light conditions or location of the sun that may affect the drivers' vision.

Look at what might change

Consider how the above hazards may change over the course of your work. For example:

- Rush-hour traffic flows
- School run traffic and parking
- Special events
- Weather, amount of daylight, and road surface conditions

Review this safety checklist

Review this checklist before beginning your roadside work. Alert your supervisor or employer if you can't answer "yes" to every question.

- ☐ Do you understand your organization's procedures for working safely at the roadside?
- ☐ Are you aware of the hazards associated with your work site?
- ☐ Have you had a safety briefing to review work site hazards?
- ☐ Do you understand the work zone set-up (e.g., traffic cones, signs)?
- ☐ Are you familiar with the movements of mobile equipment and work vehicles at your work site?
- ☐ Do you understand your organization's procedures for working safely around mobile equipment and work vehicles?
- ☐ Are you wearing your high-visibility apparel? Is it clean and usable – not torn or faded?
- ☐ Do you require other personal protective equipment (PPE) required for your job activity? If so, are you wearing it?

- ☐ Do you know your escape route in case a vehicle crosses into the work zone?
- ☐ Do you know what to do in case of an emergency incident at your work site?
- ☐ Have you discussed any and all safety concerns with your supervisor?
- ☐ If you don't know where your work site will be in advance:
 - Do you have the appropriate traffic warning signs and traffic control devices such as cones in your vehicle?
 - Do you understand how to correctly place traffic warning signs and devices?
 - Do you know how to identify and address site-specific hazards once you arrive at your work site?

Remember

- Where possible, work facing traffic. This is especially important if the area is noisy or you're wearing hearing protection. If you must turn your back to traffic, consider having a spotter to warn you of approaching vehicles.
- Be careful not to inadvertently move closer to traffic as you work. Keep your focus. Stay aware of your position.
- Be aware of changing conditions over the course of your work shift. Traffic volumes, road surface conditions, and visibility can change quickly and increase your risk.
- Be aware of mobile equipment and work vehicles, especially as they enter and exit the work zone. Ensure you make eye contact with the operator before approaching the vehicle. Do not assume the operator can see you. If possible, use a spotter if work vehicles and equipment will be moving around the site behind or beside you.
- If you have any concerns about your safety – or the safety of motorists, pedestrians, or cyclists near your work site – alert your supervisor or employer.

For more information about roadside worker safety, visit RoadSafetyAtWork.ca/WorkZone

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