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Forest Service

**Technology &
Development
Program**

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U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Incident Sign Installation Guide

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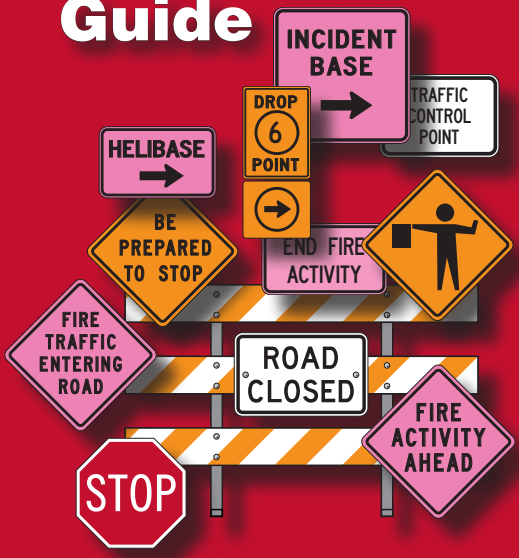

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Hari Kalla
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Ken Wood
Ed Demming

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Doug Moeller

Donna Sheehy
Professional Engineer

Ted J. Cote (Retired)
Visual Information Specialist

John R. Smith (Retired)
Project Leader

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5E52P30—Incident Sign Installation Guide

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Contents

Some photographs in this guide were digitally altered to remove distracting features.

Standards and Principles

Forest Service Safety Creed
"No job is so important that we cannot take the time to work safely."

The "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways" (MUTCD) is the national standard for signs and traffic control devices for roads. The regulations in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 655, Subpart F require that the MUTCD be followed on all Federal, State, and local roads open to public travel. The "Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service" (EM–7100–15) contain additional requirements for signs and traffic control devices used on National Forest System roads.

Temporary Traffic Control

Temporary traffic control (TTC) is needed when incidents, such as traffic accidents, wildland fires, floods, hazardous material spills, and other unplanned events, take place on or adjacent to a road, affecting or interrupting the normal flow of traffic.

Temporary Traffic Control Zones

Temporary traffic control zones guide road users through incident areas while reasonably protecting incident responders, vehicles, equipment, and road users. TTC zones also may be established when necessary to restrict use of road systems to incident management personnel. Variable message signs, warning lights, flags, barricades, and cones may be used as available to enhance the visibility of TTC zones.

Incident Sign Standards

- Design, locate, install, and maintain signs in accordance with the MUTCD and EM–7100–15 requirements.
- Coordinate with other public road authorities as soon as possible when incidents affect roads under their jurisdiction.
- Use professionally made signs made from fluorescent pink or orange retroreflective sheeting.
- Monitor and maintain signs and devices for the duration of the incident.
- Remove or cover signs promptly when they do not apply and when they are no longer needed.
- Use retroreflective pink signs when an incident occurs on or near a road that has orange construction signs.

Construction or Nonstandard Signs

- Use such signs only in an emergency when standard signs are not available.
- Replace nonstandard incident signs as soon as possible.

High-Visibility Safety Apparel

All workers, including emergency responders, who are exposed to traffic or work vehicles and construction equipment within the road right-of-way, shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of the "American National Standard for High-Visibility Safety Apparel and Headwear" (ANSI/ISEA 107–2004 or current edition). See pages 2 and 3.

High-Visibility Safety Apparel

Federal regulations require that all workers, including emergency responders, who are exposed to traffic or work vehicles and construction equipment within the road right-of-way, shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of the American National Standards Institute/International Safety Equipment Association (ANSI/ISEA) 107–2004 (or current edition).
This includes:

- Firefighters engaged in roadside firefighting activities, such as installing road signs, directing traffic, and conducting tactical/logistical operations
- Uniformed law enforcement personnel directing traffic, investigating crashes, or handling lane closures, obstructed roadways, and disasters
- Personnel conducting flagging operations for temporary traffic control
- Personnel maintaining road closures

The apparel background (outer) material color shall be fluorescent orange-red, fluorescent yellow-green, or a combination of the two. The retroreflective material shall be orange, yellow, white, silver, yellow-green, or a fluorescent version of these colors.

Nomex firefighting clothing does not meet these requirements.

The high-visibility safety apparel shall be visible at a minimum distance of 1,000 feet and clearly identify the wearer as a person.

Class 2 Garments

Class 2 garments provide a moderate level of visibility. Select when:

- Greater visibility is desired during inclement weather conditions
- Complex backgrounds are present
- Speeds of traffic or moving equipment exceed 25 miles per hour
- Workers' activities take place in closer proximity to vehicle traffic

Class 3 Garments

Class 3 garments provide the highest level of visibility. Select when workers:

- Are exposed to significantly higher vehicle speeds and/or reduced sight distances
- Face serious hazards and have high task loads that require attention away from their work
- Must be conspicuous through the full range of body motions at a minimum of 1,280 feet
- Are conducting flagging operations at night

Options

Emergency and incident responders and law enforcement personnel may choose to wear a high-visibility public safety vest that meets the performance requirements of the "American National Standard for High-Visibility Public Safety Vests" (ANSI/ISEA 207-2006 or current edition). Public safety vests can have a shorter body length than the ANSI/ISEA 107-204 vests, which allows easier access to equipment worn on a waist belt, such as radios and fire shelters.

Exceptions

Law enforcement officers engaged in adversarial or confrontational roles, such as in traffic stops and pursuit and apprehension of suspects, are not required to wear high-visibility apparel due to the additional risk that may be involved.

Firefighters or other emergency responders working within the right-of-way and engaged in emergency operations that directly expose them to flame, fire, heat, and/or hazardous materials may wear retroreflective turnout gear that is specified and regulated by other organizations, such as the National Fire Protection Association.

Job Hazard Analysis

A work supervisor should perform a documented Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) to determine the appropriate class of garment for use. The appropriate garment color should be selected based on which color will provide the greatest contrast between the worker and the work environment. If there is any doubt as to the appropriate class, the work supervisor should select the one with the higher level of protection.

Replacement

High-visibility safety apparel should be replaced when it becomes faded, torn, dirty, soiled, worn, or defaced, or if it is not visible at 1,000 feet day or night. The typical useful service life of high-visibility safety apparel depends on the type of work an individual performs while wearing the apparel. Apparel that is worn on a daily basis has a service life expectancy of about 6 months, although apparel that is not worn on a daily basis may have a useful service life of up to 3 years or more.

High-visibility apparel should be stored in a cool, dry location out of direct sunlight when not in use.

Traffic Control Devices

Traffic control devices are signs, signals, markings, and other devices used to regulate, warn, or guide road users. These devices are placed on or adjacent to a road by authority of the agency having jurisdiction over the road.

Regulatory Signs

- Inform persons using the road of traffic laws, regulations, and legal requirements.
- Are enforced by law as authorized by the agency with jurisdiction over the road.

Warning Signs

- Warn road users of unexpected conditions or situations on or adjacent to a road.
- Indicate the need for caution by road users.
- May call for reduced speed or an unexpected maneuver.
- Are diamond shaped.
- Must be retroreflective fluorescent pink or orange.

Guide Signs

- Inform road users of important sites such as incident bases, helibases, and staging areas.
- Allow time for road users to make appropriate decisions before reaching an intersection.
- Are rectangular shaped.

Typical Barricade Installations

Use Type 3 barricades (three rails) to close or partially close roads for temporary traffic control activities related to incident management. See pages 22 and 23 for proper barricade installation for road closures.

Use Type 1 (one rail) and Type 2 (two rails) barricades where traffic flow is maintained through the temporary traffic control zone. Minimum length is 24 inches.

Stripes on barricade rails shall be alternating 6-inch orange and white retroreflective stripes. Stripes on the rails shall point downward in the direction that road users are to pass. If traffic is not allowed past the closure, stripes shall point downward to the center of the barricade.

Standard traffic control signs are often needed on Type 3 barricades. Typical signs mounted on these barricades include: ROAD CLOSED, AREA CLOSED, or ROAD USE PERMIT REQUIRED FOR THRU TRAFFIC.

Do not place other signs, posters, or maps on barricades.

Mount signs on the barricade at least 1 foot above the road. Signs mounted on Type 3 barricades should not cover more than 50 percent of the top two rails or 33 percent of the total area of the three rails.

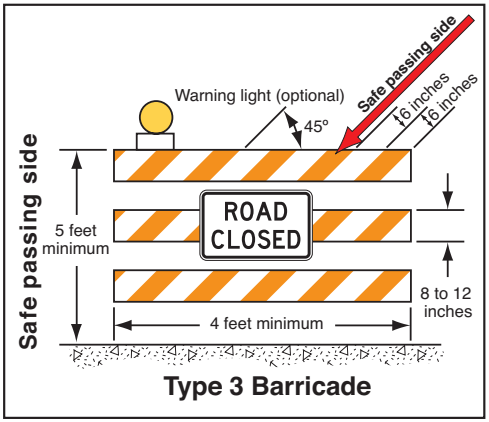
Barricades shall be visible from both directions when incident and permitted local traffic exit the area from the other direction.

Use only crashworthy barricades.

Anchor barricades that may overturn in the wind with appropriate ballast, such as sandbags or water jugs.

Do not place ballast on top of any striped rail. Do not use objects for ballast on a barricade that will not deform in a collision. Examples of incorrect objects are rocks and concrete blocks.

Homemade barriers, such as sawhorses and wooden posts, do not meet the required standards.



A barricade is placed in the lane where traffic will stop. Stripes point to the direction that traffic will pass.

Typical Installations

Methods of Mounting Signs

If the duration or scope of an incident is unknown and may change rapidly, approved portable devices may be used. Portable supports must be crashworthy. Several methods of mounting portable signs are shown on page 7. Additional information is available in the MUTCD, chapter 6F—Temporary Traffic Control Zone Devices.

Signs may be mounted on temporary sign stands, U-channel posts, existing utility poles, delineator posts, or other appropriate posts. Rollup signs are easily mounted on portable sign stands or on existing delineator posts.

If no other option exists, incident signs may be installed on the same post as similar existing signs if incident signs do not compromise the message of the existing sign.

Do not cover existing regulatory or warning signs with incident signs.

However, if existing signs conflict with incident signs, or if they do not apply during the management of the incident, cover existing signs to prevent confusion.

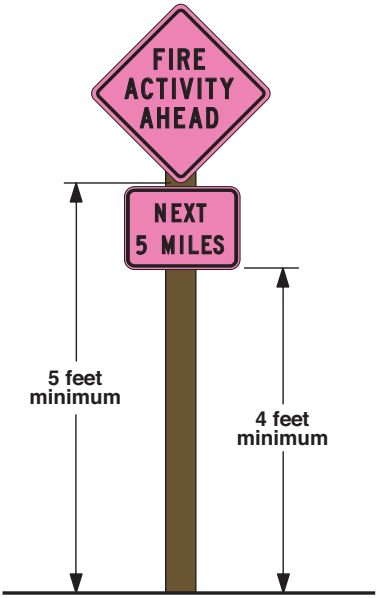
Signs mounted on barricades or other portable supports must be at least 1 foot above the traveled way.

Locate incident signs on the right-hand side of the road as close to the standard location of traffic signs as is practical. Where special emphasis is needed or where signs may be blocked by traffic, place signs on both sides of the roadway.

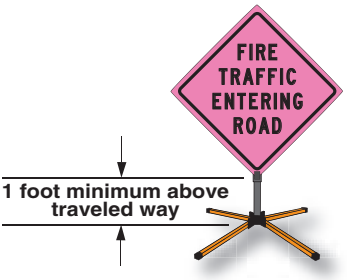
Consider the following guidelines when selecting sign placement locations:

- Place signs where they provide adequate time for proper viewer response, considering factors such as speed, road conditions, intermediate intersections, and road geometry (see pages 8 and 9).
- Select locations that minimize viewing obstructions. Avoid locations:
    - Such as dips in the roadway or trail
    - Just beyond the crest of a hill
    - Where a sign could be obscured by other signs
    - Where the sign may interfere with the normal operation of the facility
    - Where road users have an increased need to focus on the roadway
- Erect signs individually on separate mountings except where one sign supplements another, such as a warning sign with an advisory speed plaque, or where incident name and destination signs are grouped.
- Relocate signs if traffic congestion extends past the original location of the signs.

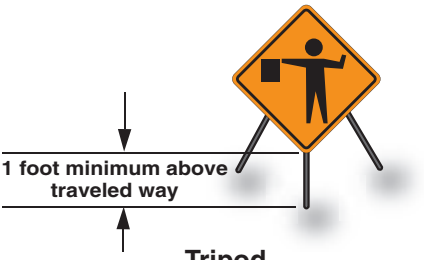
Mounting Methods



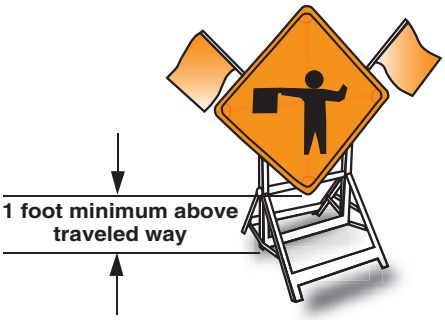
Post



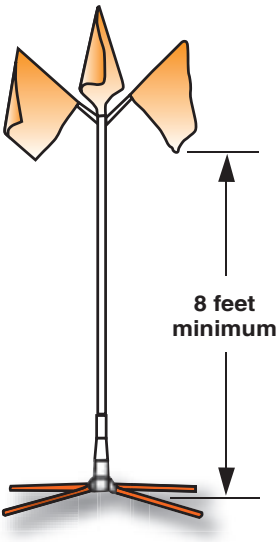
Retractable sign stand



Tripod



Barricade mounting
Orange flags (optional)



High-level warning device

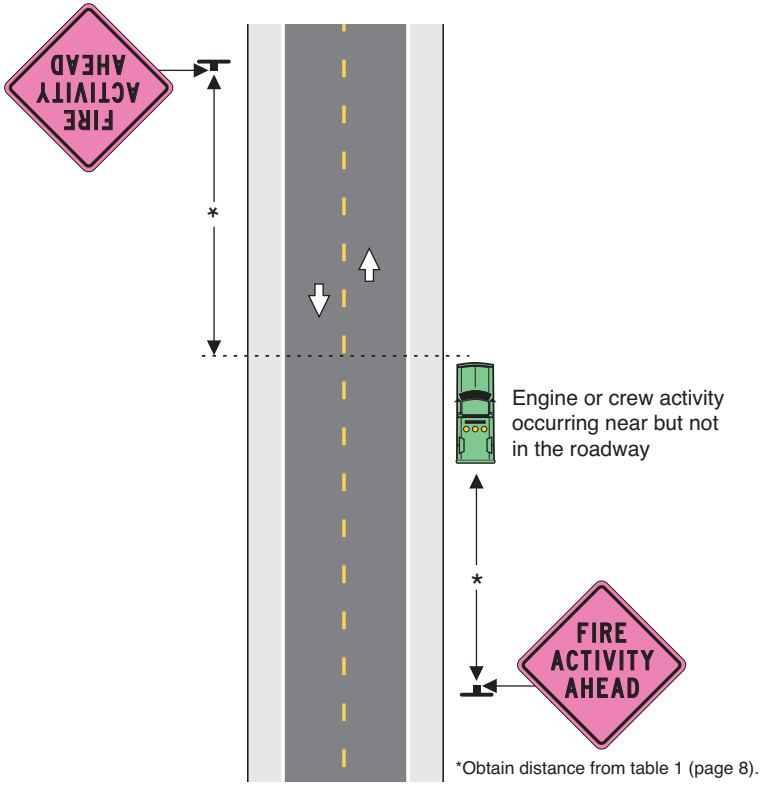
Spacing of Advance Warning Signs for Temporary Traffic Control

The distance from the first sign to the start of the incident area should be long enough to give road users enough time to respond to the conditions.

Use the following table to determine the distance for spacing ***Warning*** signs for activity that is not in or blocking the roadway.

Table 1—Spacing of advance warning signs for temporary traffic control.

Speed limit or prevailing approach speed (miles per hour)	Distance from incident area to the first sign and between subsequent signs (feet)
25 or less	100
30 to 45	350
Over 45	500
For expressways and freeways, contact the applicable State department of transportation.	



Advance Placement of Guide Signs at Intersections

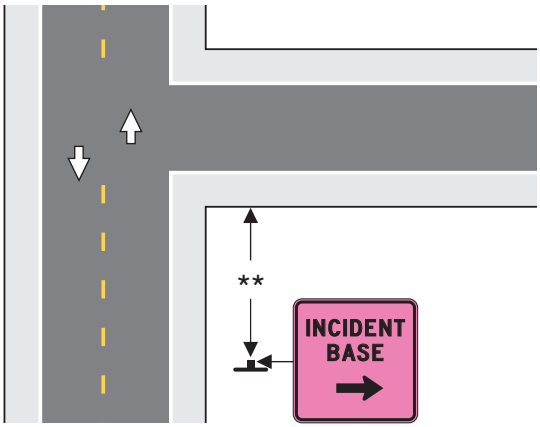
The distance from the first sign to the start of the incident area should be long enough to give road users enough time to respond to the conditions.

Use the following table to determine the spacing for ***Guide*** signs.

Make sure you place guide signs far enough in front of the point where road users should begin maneuvering by using the distances in table 2.

Table 2—Advance placement of guide signs at intersections.

Speed limit or prevailing approach speed (miles per hour)	Distance from the intersection (feet)
Less than 15	25
15 to 25	100
30 to 40	100 to 200
Over 45	200 minimum
For expressways and freeways, contact the applicable State department of transportation.	



** Obtain distance from table 2 (page 9).

Incident Management Activity at Intersections

Application Notes

Install a warning and guide sign at each approach to the intersection. The warning sign (sign 1) attracts attention. It is the most critical sign and always takes precedence over the guide sign (sign 2).

Use the FIRE TRAFFIC ENTERING ROAD warning sign to warn approaching road users that incident traffic is entering and exiting at the intersection.

Use of the advisory speed plaque is optional. Its use requires approval by the applicable State department of transportation if it is placed on State roads.

Don't use advisory speed plaques by themselves.

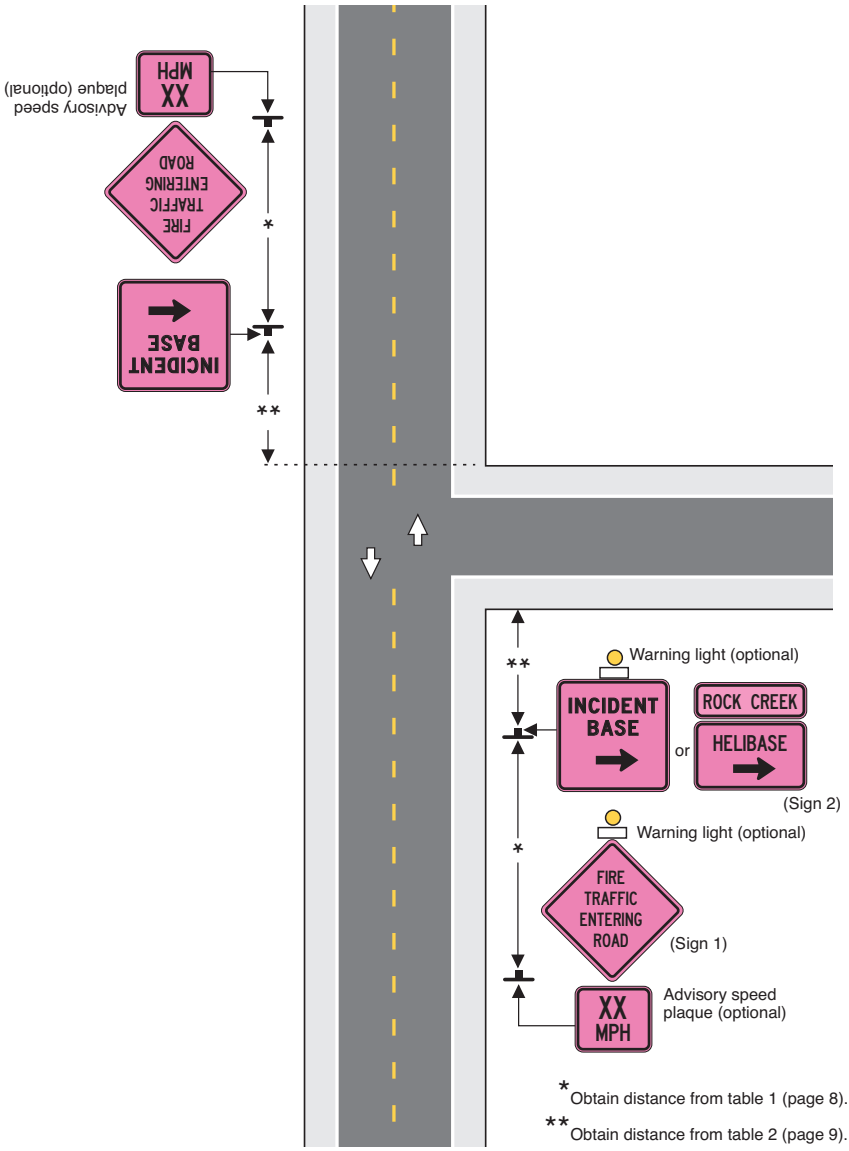
If enforceable or advisory speed limits are necessary, work with the appropriate road agency that has jurisdiction.

Use guide signs at critical intersections to direct incident management traffic to destinations such as:

- Incident bases
- Helibases
- Staging areas
- Helicopter bucket dip sites
- Washing stations

When several incidents are in the same area, a nameplate may help people locate the right incident. The name of the incident should be on a separate sign mounted on top of the guide sign.

Incident Management Activity at Intersections



Approaching and Ending Fire Activity Zones

Application Notes

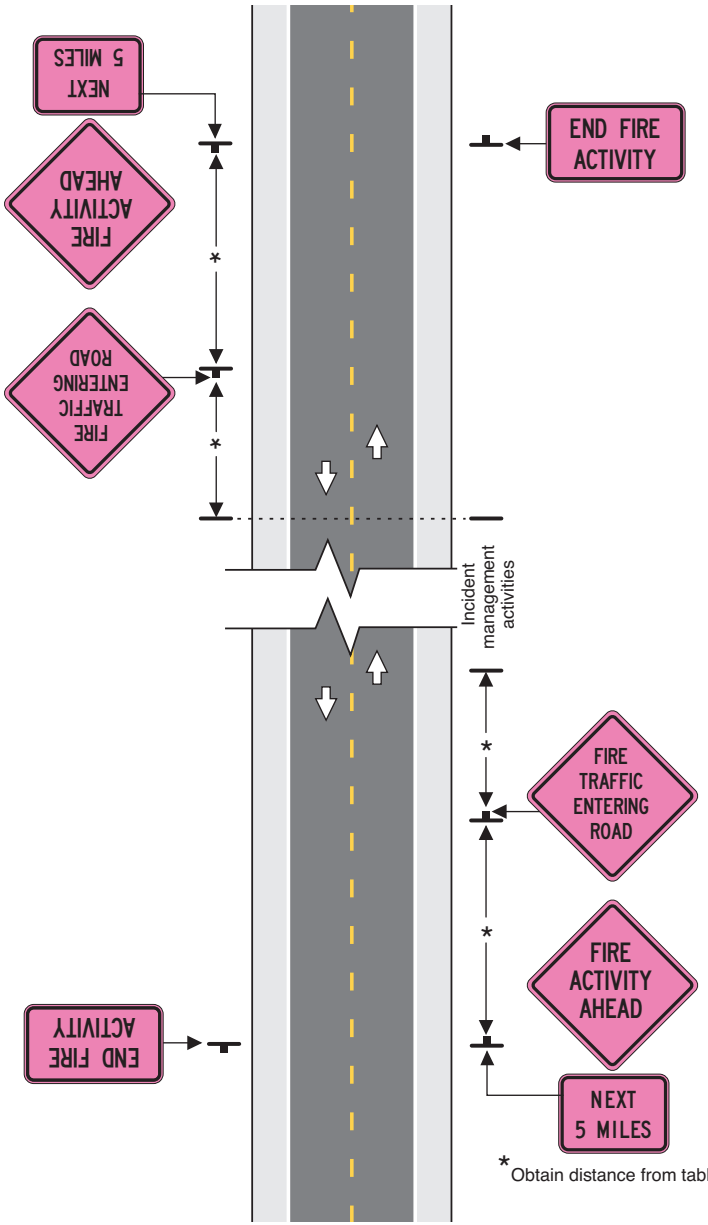
Incident management activities may occur throughout an incident zone over a long section of road.

Use the FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD sign with a distance plaque indicating the length of the traffic control zone as the first sign in a series of incident management signs.

Use the END FIRE ACTIVITY sign to let road users know that they may resume normal driving. Place the END FIRE ACTIVITY sign on the opposite side of the road from the FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD sign warning road users coming from the other direction.

If the incident activity occurs over more than 5 miles of road, install additional FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD signs with the distance plaque at least every 5 miles.

Approaching and Ending Fire Activity Zones



* Obtain distance from table 1 (page 8).

Initial Attack Engine or Crew Operations Along a Roadway

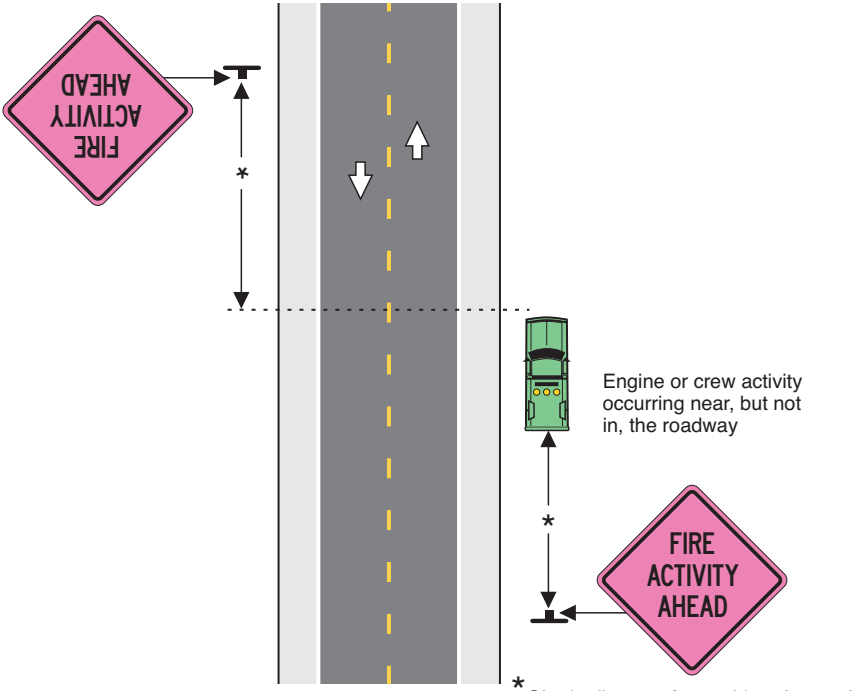
Application Notes

The FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD sign may be omitted if the incident vehicle or activity is behind a barrier, more than 24 inches behind a curb, or more than 15 feet from the edge of any roadway.

For operations lasting less than 30 minutes, signs are not required if the incident vehicle uses activated high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights.

Hazard-warning signals on vehicles may be used to supplement—but not replace—high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights.

Initial Attack Engine or Crew Operations Along a Roadway



* Obtain distance from table 1 (page 8).

Flagging Operations To Stop Traffic for Helicopter Activities

Application Notes

Intermittent flagging operations may be needed to stop traffic when helicopter operations affect road users.

A flagger must be trained and certified by a State- or Federal-approved training and certification agency in safe traffic control practices and public contact techniques. Flaggers shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of ANSI/ISEA 107–2004 (or current edition).

Use the BE PREPARED TO STOP and the flagger symbol signs during all flagging operations. Remove, cover, or turn signs face down when traffic is not being flagged.

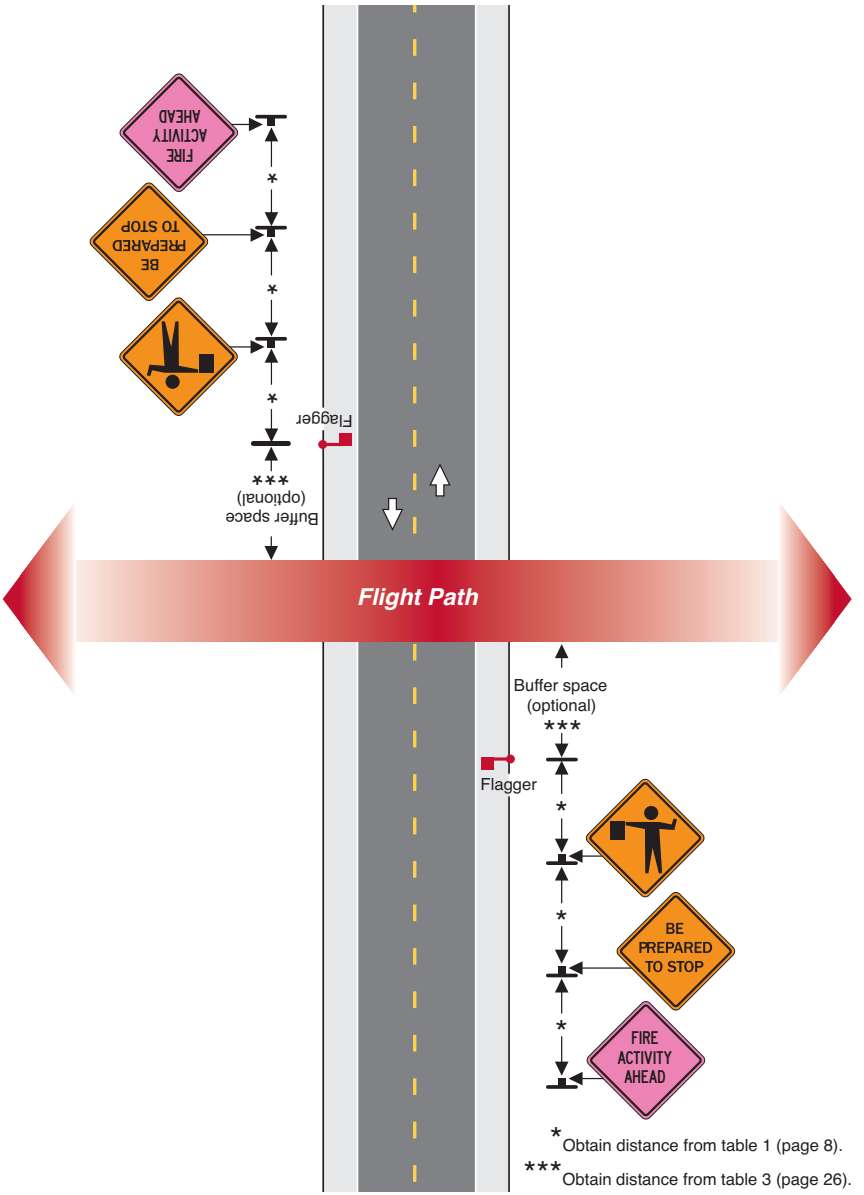
The advance warning sign FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD should be visible at all times, even when flagging operations are suspended.

The flagger should:

- **Never stand in a lane used by moving traffic.** Stand either on the shoulder adjacent to the lane being controlled or in the closed lane before stopping road users.
- Only stand in the lane being used by moving traffic after road users have stopped.
- Be clearly visible to the first approaching road user at all times.
- Be visible to other road users.
- Be stationed sufficiently in advance of the flight path to allow vehicles time to stop. Use table 3 on page 26.
- Stand alone, away from other workers, work vehicles, or equipment.

Where adequate sight distance is available for the reasonably safe handling of traffic, the use of one flagger may be sufficient.

Flagging Operations To Stop Traffic for Helicopter Activities



See pages 26 through 28 for flagger requirements.

Intermittent Flagging Operations at Intersections

Application Notes

Intermittent flagging operations may be needed during shift changes or at other critical times of the incident operation.

A flagger must be trained and certified by a State- or Federal-approved training and certification agency in safe traffic control practices and public contact techniques. Flaggers shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of ANSI/ISEA 107–2004 (or current edition).

Use the BE PREPARED TO STOP and the flagger symbol signs during all flagging operations. Remove, cover, or turn signs face down when traffic is not being flagged.

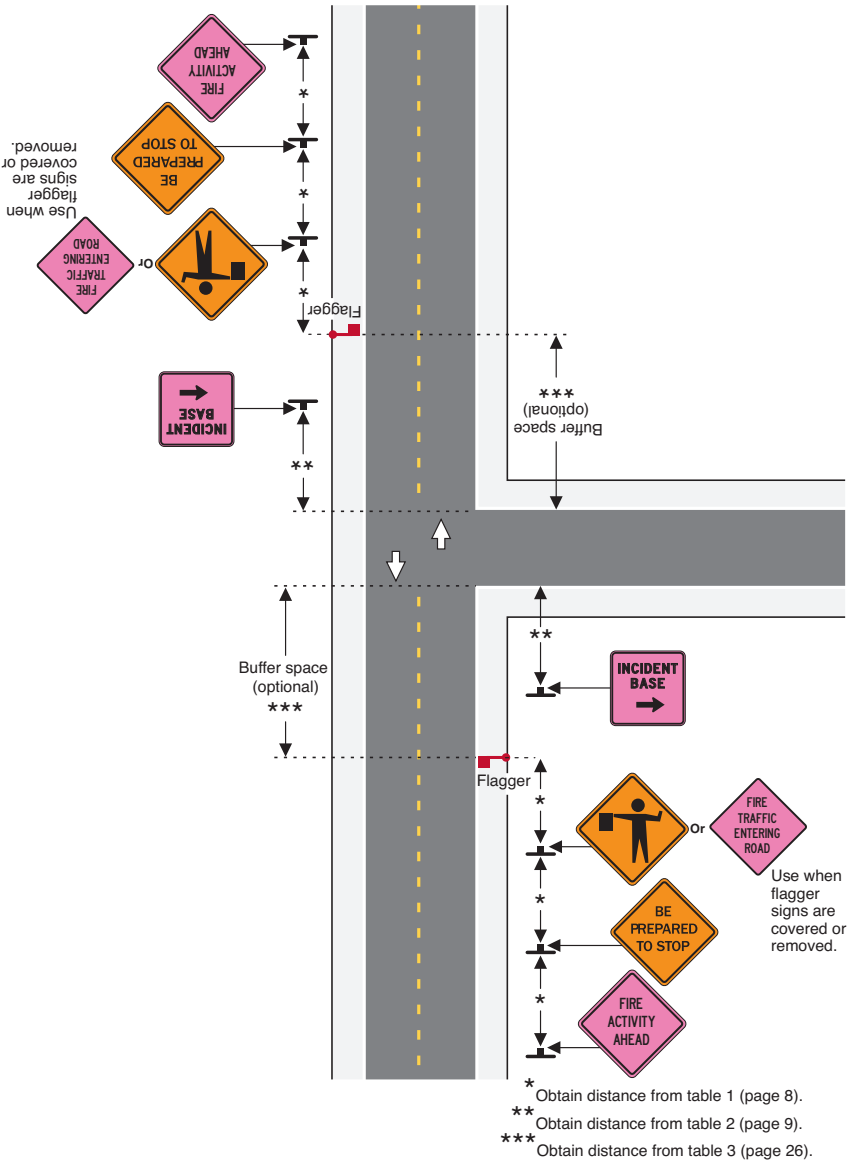
The advance warning sign FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD should be visible at all times, even when flagging operations are suspended.

The flagger should:

- **Never stand in a lane used by moving traffic.** Stand either on the shoulder adjacent to the lane being controlled or in the closed lane before stopping road users.
- Only stand in the lane being used by moving traffic after road users have stopped.
- Be clearly visible to the first approaching road user at all times.
- Be visible to other road users.
- Be stationed sufficiently in advance of the intersection to allow vehicles time to stop. Use table 3 on page 26.
- Stand alone, away from other workers, work vehicles, or equipment.

At spot lane closures where adequate sight distance is available for the reasonably safe handling of traffic, the use of one flagger may be sufficient.

Intermittent Flagging Operations at Intersections



See pages 26 through 28 for flagger requirements.

Drop Points

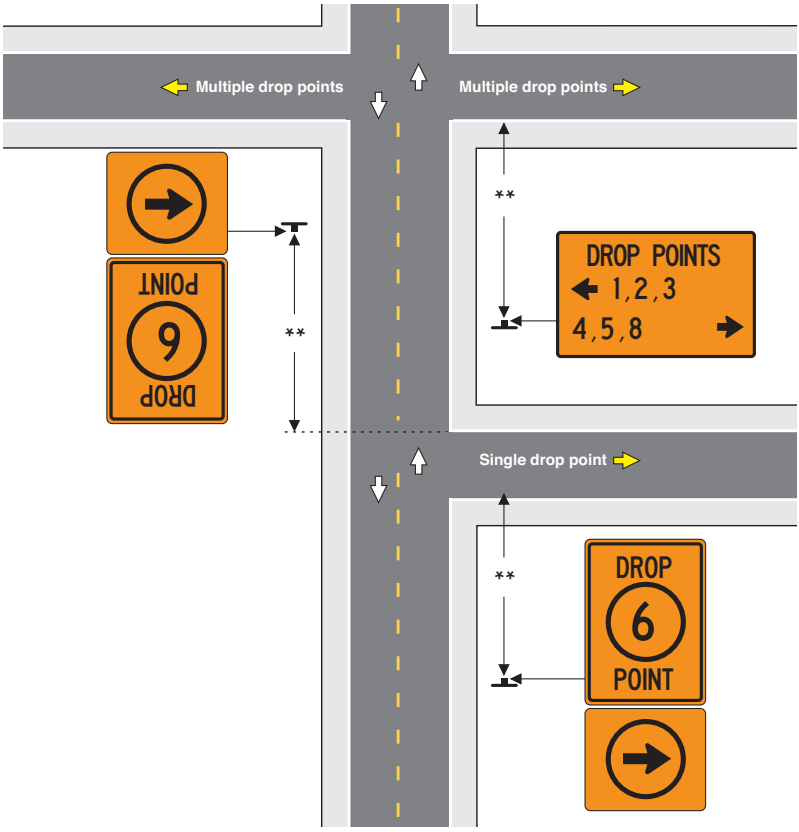
Application Notes

DROP POINT signs are guide signs that direct incident personnel to specific destinations where they can drop off or pick up supplies and crews.

Use the single DROP POINT sign for individual drop points. Use the multiple DROP POINT sign to direct traffic to several drop points from a single intersection.

If drop points are accessed only from one direction, signs may be needed only on that side of the roadway.

Drop Points



**Obtain distance from table 2 (page 9).

Staffed Emergency Road Closures

Application Notes

Official traffic control points are established to stop traffic, limit congestion, expedite emergency traffic, exclude unauthorized vehicles, and protect the public.

Traffic control personnel shall wear high-visibility safety apparel at all times. See pages 2 and 3.

Use the TRAFFIC CONTROL POINT sign, in conjunction with a standard STOP sign, to designate an official traffic control point. Install the signs at the point where traffic must stop to be checked. Mount the TRAFFIC CONTROL POINT sign directly below the STOP sign.

Locate the traffic control point so that road users may safely turn around if they are refused entry. Typically, road users coming out of the temporary traffic control zone are not stopped. If exit signs are needed, they should match the approach signs.

Park the traffic control personnel vehicles out of traffic on the right side near the closure. Traffic control personnel should not cross the open roadway to speak to approaching drivers.

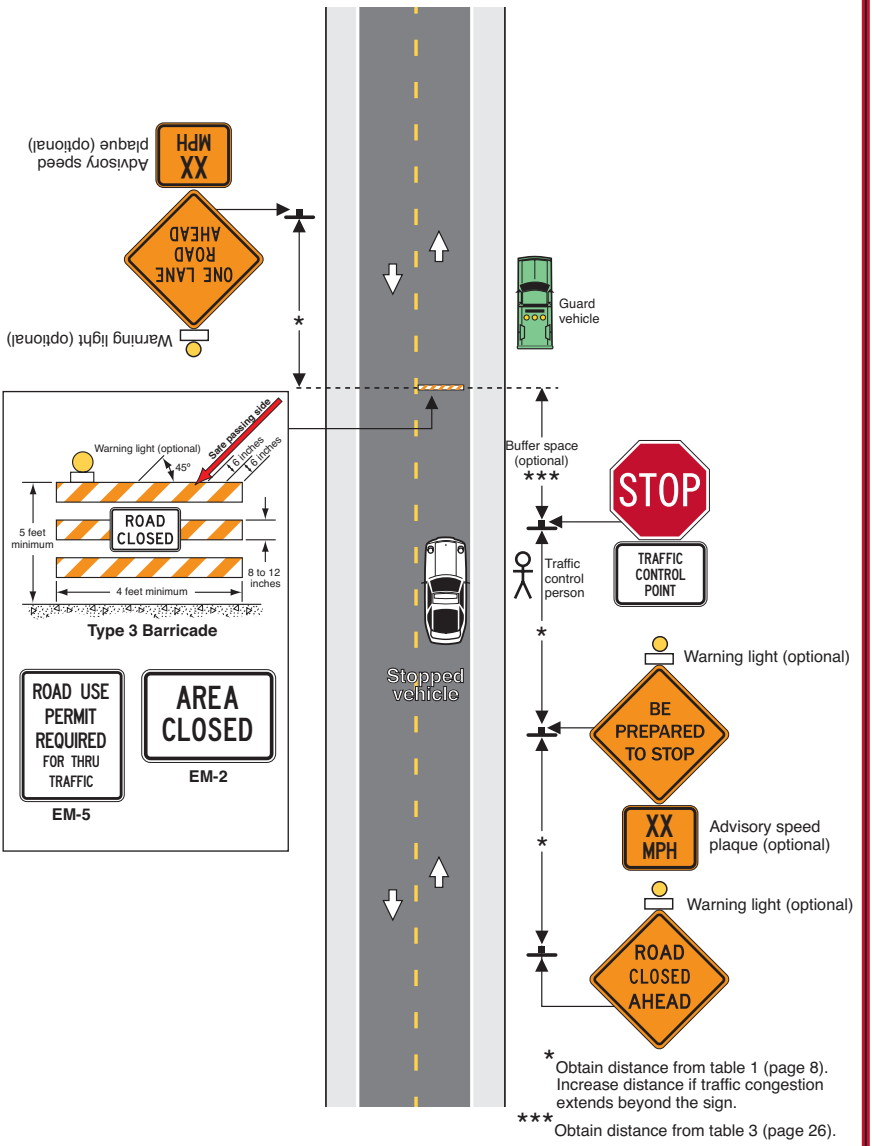
Do not stand or sit in front of or behind the barricade.

Place a Type 3 barricade in the lane where traffic is being stopped.
Barricade stripes point to the direction traffic is to pass. See page 5.

Do not post notices and other information on the barricade.

Use appropriate closure signs on the barricade such as ROAD CLOSED, AREA CLOSED, or ROAD USE PERMIT REQUIRED.

Staffed Emergency Road Closures



Traffic Cone and Flare Placement

Application Notes

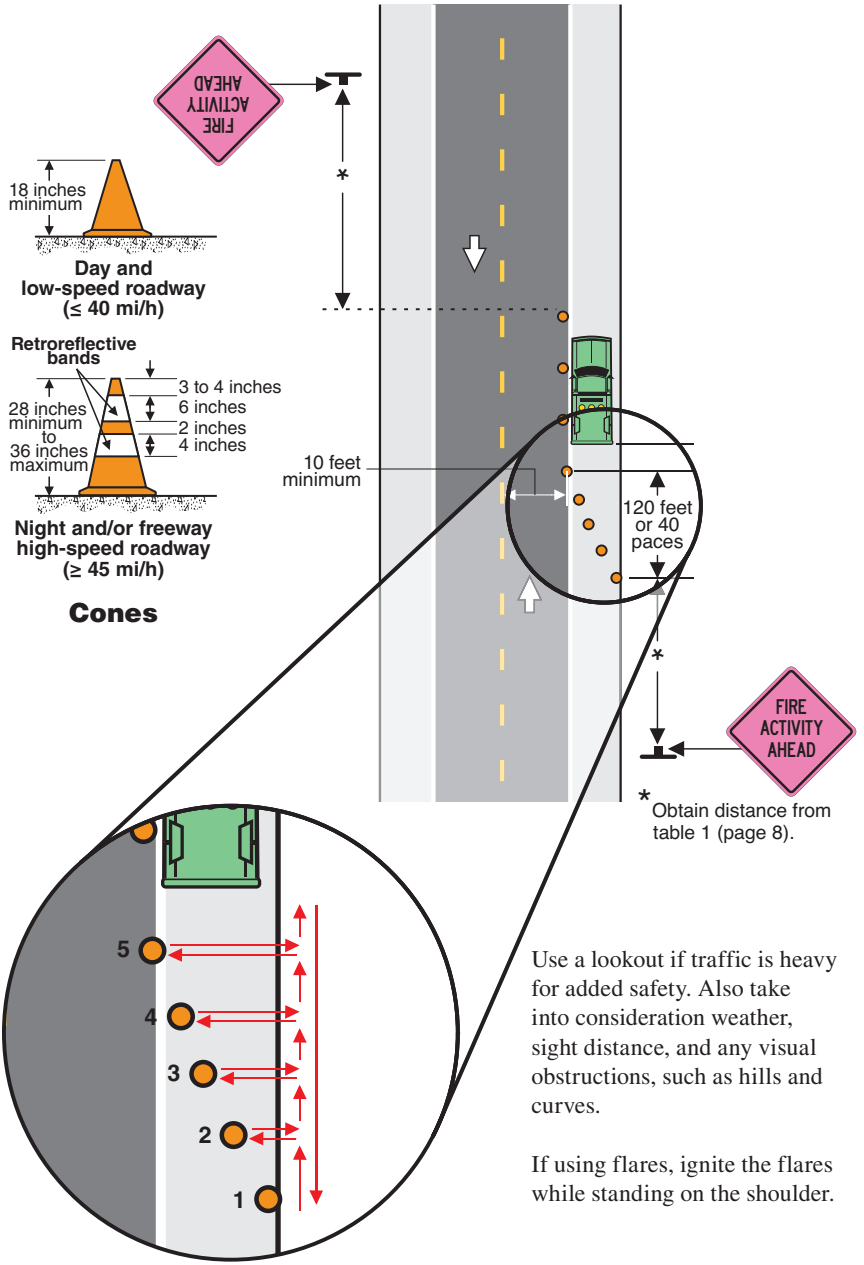
Traffic cones and flares can help define the work area and provide another level of visibility. Cones and flares should be placed while facing oncoming traffic at all times. Wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements of ANSI/ISEA 107–2004 (or current edition) when placing cones or flares. Place a FIRE ACTIVITY AHEAD sign before placing cones or flares (see page 25).

To establish a taper using a ratio of 10:1 for cones (or flares):

- Walk along a safe pathway on the road shoulder. Place a cone on the shoulder every 10 paces until you reach the farthest location where **cone 1** is to be placed. Distance should be approximately 40 paces or 120 feet.
- Set **cone 1** on the shoulder while standing in a safe area.
- Move back 10 paces toward the incident scene along the shoulder. When safe to enter the road, take one pace or 3 feet into the road and place **cone 2**. Immediately return to the shoulder.
- Move back 10 paces toward the incident scene along the shoulder. When safe to enter the road, take two paces or 6 feet into the road and place **cone 3**. Immediately return to the shoulder.
- Move back 10 paces toward the incident scene along the shoulder. When safe to enter the road, take three paces or 9 feet into the road and place **cone 4**. Return to the shoulder.
- Move back 10 paces toward the incident scene along the shoulder. When safe to enter the road, take four paces or 12 feet into the road and place **cone 5**. Immediately return to the shoulder. The final cone should be near the rear of the responder vehicle or the beginning of the buffer space.
- The spacing between cones should not exceed a distance in feet equal to 1.0 times the speed limit in miles per hour (mi/h) when used for the taper.

Additional cones or flares may be used to establish a tangent along the incident area. The spacing between tangent cones and flares should not exceed a distance in feet equal to two times the speed limit in mi/h.

Traffic Cone and Flare Placement



Use a lookout if traffic is heavy for added safety. Also take into consideration weather, sight distance, and any visual obstructions, such as hills and curves.

If using flares, ignite the flares while standing on the shoulder.

Temporary Traffic Control—Flagging

Flaggers

Flaggers must be trained and certified by a State- or Federal-approved training and certification agency in safe traffic control practices and public contact techniques.

Flaggers should demonstrate the ability to:

- Receive and communicate specific instructions clearly, firmly, and courteously.
- Move quickly to avoid danger from errant vehicles.
- Control signaling devices to provide clear guidance to approaching drivers.
- Apply safe traffic control practices in stressful or emergency situations.
- Recognize dangerous traffic situations and warn workers quickly enough so they can avoid injury.

High-Visibility Safety Apparel

Flaggers must be clearly visible to approaching traffic. Flaggers shall wear high-visibility safety apparel that meets the Performance Class 2 or 3 requirements. For nighttime activity, flaggers should wear safety apparel meeting Class 3 risk exposure (see pages 2 and 3).

Buffer Space

Flagger stations should be located in advance of the actual work area so that approaching road users will have enough visibility distance to stop safely. Guidelines for buffer space distances are shown in table 3 and are based on stopping sight distances. Distances may be increased for downgrades and other conditions that affect stopping distances.

Table 3—Buffer space distance for flagger stations.

Speed mi/h	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75
Distance feet	115	155	200	250	305	360	425	495	570	645	730	820

Use posted speed, 85th-percentile speed prior to work area, or the anticipated operating speed.

Except in emergencies, flagger stations shall be preceded by advance warning signs to alert road users and shall be illuminated at night.

At a spot constriction, the flagger may have to take a position on the shoulder opposite the closed section to operate effectively. At spot lane closures where adequate sight distance is available for safely handling traffic, one flagger may be enough. Vehicle activity or storage of equipment, vehicles, or materials should not occur in a buffer space.

Communication

When two flaggers are used, they can communicate verbally or visually if they are close enough and visible to each other. One of the flaggers should be designated as the coordinator. Where either end of a one-lane section is not visible from the other end, the flaggers may maintain control using such methods as:

- Radio or field telephone.
- An official car that follows the last road user proceeding through the section.
- A pilot car to guide a queue of vehicles through the temporary traffic control zone or detour. The pilot car shall have a sign (PILOT CAR FOLLOW ME) mounted on the rear of the vehicle.

STOP/SLOW Paddle – Preferred Method

The STOP/SLOW paddle should be the primary hand-signaling device.
It shall meet the following standards:

- It shall be an octagonal shape.
- It shall be a minimum 18 inches wide with 6-inch letters.
- The STOP face shall have white letters and border on a red background.
- The SLOW face shall have black letters and border on an orange background.
- It shall be retroreflective when used at night.
- It shall be fastened to a rigid staff that is tall enough that when the end of the staff is resting on the ground, the message is high enough to be seen by approaching or stopped traffic.

Flagging Procedures

Face road users at all times.
Hold STOP/SLOW paddle stationary with arm horizontally away from the body.

To Stop Traffic:
Use STOP side.
Hold free arm with palm of the hand above shoulder.

To Let Traffic Proceed:
Use SLOW side.
Use free arm to motion for road users to proceed.

To Alert and Slow Traffic:
Use SLOW side.
Motion up and down with the free hand, palm down.

Temporary Traffic Control—Flagging

Flags – Emergency Situations Only

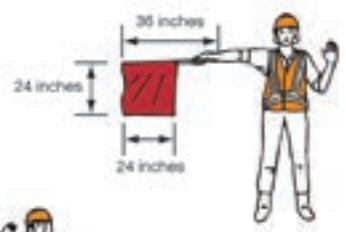
Flags should only be used in emergencies. When used, flags shall be:

- Red or fluorescent orange/red in color
- A minimum of 24 inches square
- Securely fastened to a staff that is about 36 inches in length
- Retroreflective red when used at nighttime

The free edge of a flag should be weighted so the flag will hang vertically, even in heavy winds.

Flagging Procedures

Face road users at all times.



To Stop Traffic:

Hold red flag stationary with arm horizontally away from the body.

Hold free arm with palm of the hand above shoulder.

To Let Traffic Proceed:

Do not use flag. Lower flag from view.

Use free arm to motion for road users to proceed.

To Alert and Slow Traffic:

Hold red flag with arm horizontally away from the body.

Slowly wave flag down and back to horizontal.

Keep free hand down.

Library Card

Sheehy, Donna; Cote, Ted J.; Smith, John R. 2012. Incident sign installation guide. Tech. Rep. 1251–2820P–MTDC. Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Missoula Technology and Development Center. 28 p.

This report explains how guide, warning, and regulatory signs can be used properly at incidents. Incidents may include any number of different situations, such as wildfires, hurricanes, other natural disasters, and other unplanned events such as traffic accidents. Signs that are set up properly at incidents can reduce the risk of traffic accidents. The guide is based on standards established by the "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" and the "Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service" (EM–7100–15).

Keywords: flagging, fire fighting, firefighting, high-visibility safety apparel, incident management, road signs, safety at work, specifications, standards, traffic, traffic control, traffic safety, wildfire

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