



# Flagger's Handbook

*September 2024*

**NYS LTAP Center - Cornell Local Roads Program**

***Name***

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# *Flagger's Safety*



*Your safety,  
the safety of your crew,  
and the safety of the motoring public  
are more important than any  
construction, maintenance,  
or utility operation being performed.*





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# *Introduction*



You have been chosen to be a Flagger because you are physically able, mentally alert, and capable of giving directions to the motoring public.

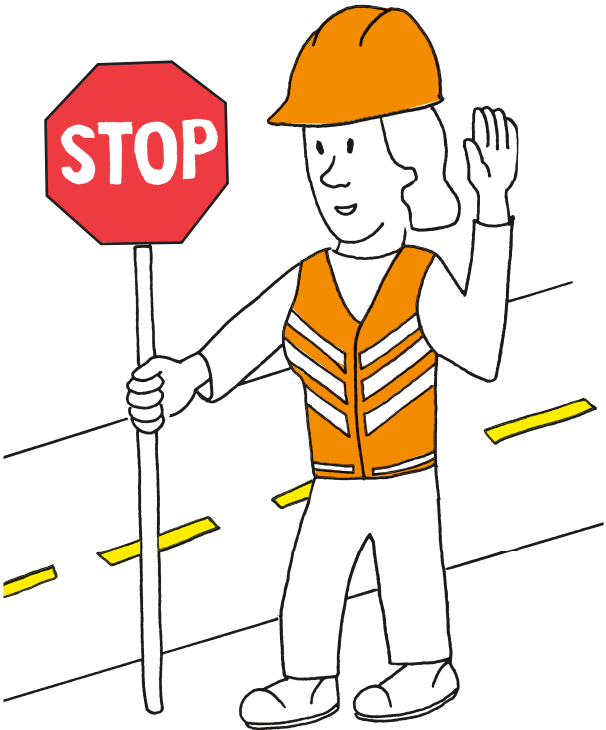
Because you are an important part of all maintenance, construction, and utility projects, you need to know this guide well enough that it becomes second nature.

Your fellow workers and the highway users depend upon your alertness and ability to control traffic with your STOP/SLOW paddle.

You have an important job, and it should be carried out with authority and dignity.

# *The Basic Functions*

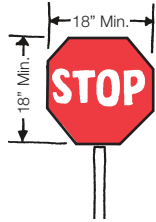
- To guide traffic safely through the work area.
- To protect the lives of workers.
- To avoid unreasonable delays to motorists.
- To answer questions courteously.  
and intelligently.



***Courtesy is important.  
Your actions reflect on you  
and your employer.***

# Equipment

The STOP/SLOW paddle is your main traffic control device. The sign shall be at least 18" x 18" with 6" high letters and should be mounted on a rigid handle. A 5' minimum mounting height is required. A 6' or 7' mounting height is recommended.



To make the paddle more visible, a 24" x 24" sign size or a high-intensity flashing STOP/SLOW paddle may be used. A larger sign may be harder to handle on windy days.



You must wear an approved safety vest, shirt, or coat while flagging. Approved colors are orange, yellow, strong yellow-green, or fluorescent versions of these colors.

A brightly colored hat will also make you more visible (hard hats may be required by your agency).

An air horn is a good device to alert your co-workers if a vehicle appears likely to run into the work area.



Proper signs shall be in place before flagging begins, and removed when work ends.



Night flagging requires all traffic control devices to be retroreflectorized. (See p. 16 for equipment required.)

Flags should only be used in emergency situations. (See p. 18 for details.) Experience has shown that it is very difficult to direct motorists by waving a flag.



# *Appearance*

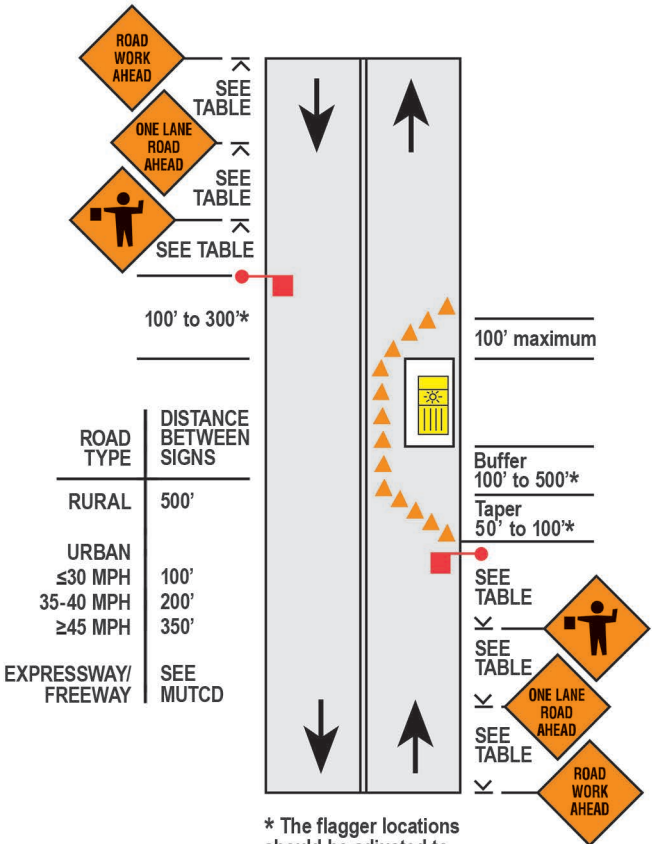


***To assure motorist respect  
your appearance is critical.***

- All flaggers should maintain a clean, neat appearance.
- Flaggers shall not wear attire that could distract motorists.
- Transistor radios, walkmans, or books are not permitted.
- Safe and appropriate footwear should be worn.

# Advance Warning Signs

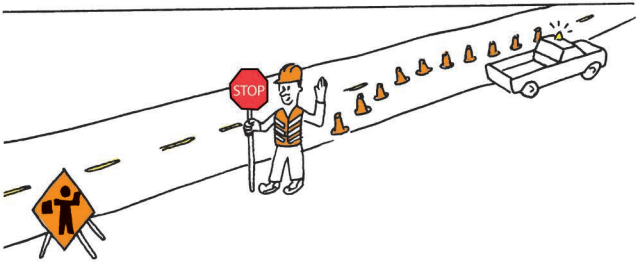
Before beginning any flagging operation, advance warning signs need to be in place. For most flagging operations the layout of signs shown below will be used.



\* The flagger locations should be adjusted to allow oncoming traffic to clearly see the flaggers

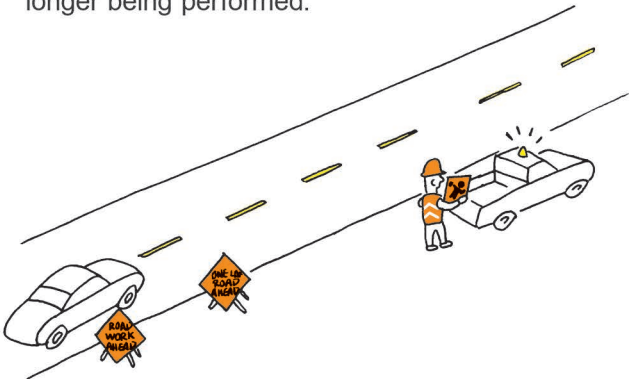
# Sign Placement

The work crew is responsible for the proper placement of advanced warning signs in conformance with the MUTCD. These signs must be in place before beginning any flagging operation.



# Sign Removal

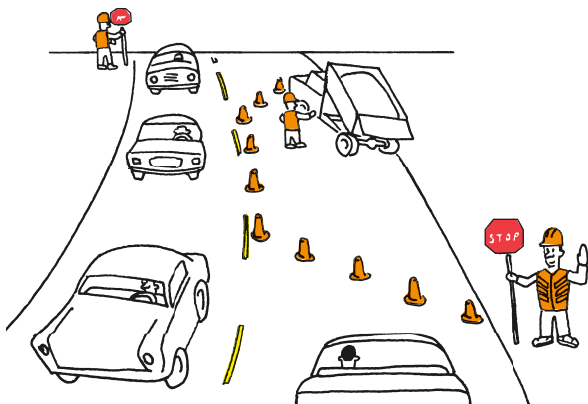
Remove, fold over, or cover the flagger sign and other inappropriate signs when flagging is no longer being performed.



***Do not mislead the public.***

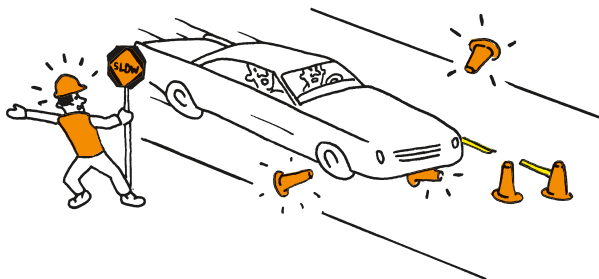
# Position

You should always stand **alone in a highly visible location** away from other workers and work vehicles.



Your normal flagging location is on the shoulder of the road.

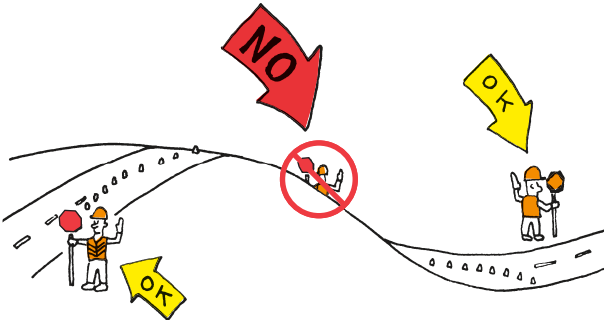
***Never stand in the path of oncoming traffic.***



***Do not stand inside any obstacle. Always allow for a quick getaway.***

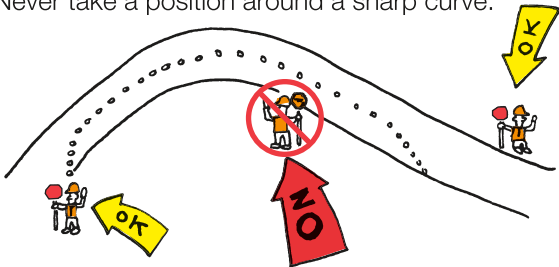
# Hills

When flagging near a hill, you should take a position in advance of the hill. Make sure you are visible to approaching traffic. Never take a position over the crest of a hill.



# Curves

When flagging near curves, always make sure you are visible to approaching traffic. Your flagging station should be well in advance of the curve. Never take a position around a sharp curve.



Communication between flaggers is critical under these conditions. The best way to maintain communications is two-way radios, but relay flaggers, a pilot car, or the flag-carrying method could also be used.

# *Signals*

## ***Stopping Traffic***

Stand in a safe position on the shoulder facing traffic. Never stand in the path of oncoming traffic, and never turn your back on traffic.

Hold the paddle away from your body with the STOP sign facing traffic and the sign on or near the edge of the pavement. Raise your free hand with the palm exposed to the approaching vehicle and make eye contact with the driver.

Change to the STOP only if an approaching vehicle has plenty of distance to gradually stop.

***Avoid screeching halts.***

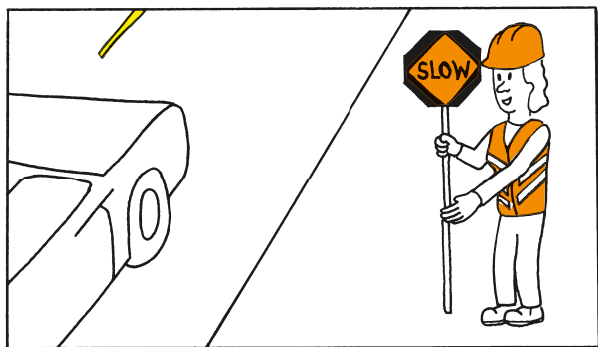
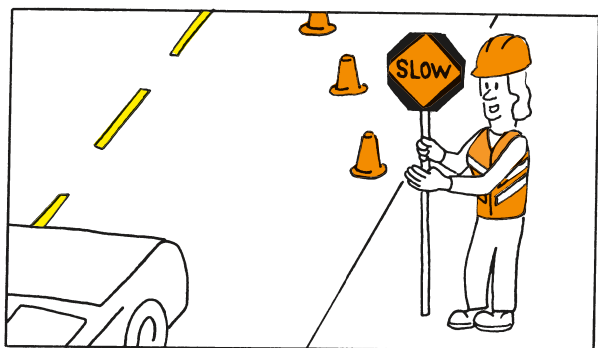
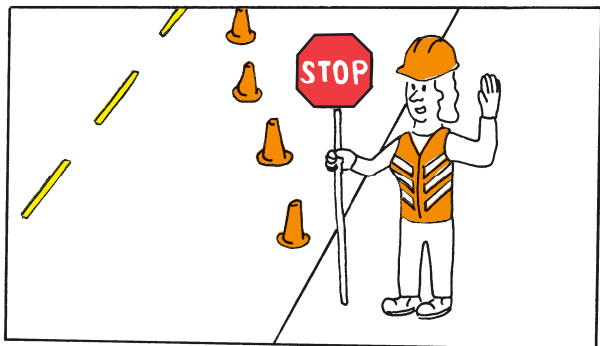
## ***Releasing Traffic/Closed Lane***

Standing on the shoulder of the closed lane with your paddle turned to STOP, you must wait for an “all clear” signal from the other flagger before you release your traffic.

Once the “all clear” is received, you may release your traffic by turning the paddle to show the SLOW sign. Then with your free arm, signal drivers to proceed into the open lane. Be direct and point to the open lane.

## ***Releasing Traffic/Open Lane***

Standing on the shoulder of the open lane with your paddle turned to STOP wait for the “all clear” signal. Once the signal is received, you may release your traffic. First take a step or two back from the edge of the pavement and turn the paddle to SLOW. Then with your free arm, signal drivers to proceed in the open lane. Be direct and clear with your hand signal.



# Signals

## ***Slowing Traffic***

Stand on the shoulder facing traffic.

With the SLOW sign showing, slowly raise and lower your left arm with the palm facing down in front of your paddle.

## ***“All Clear” Signal***

When two flaggers are used, they must always be able to communicate with one another. This can be done by keeping visual contact, using radios, or using the flag-carrying method.

If visual contact is possible, then the “all clear” signal can be given by lifting your hard hat. When you give this signal, you are telling the other flagger that you have traffic stopped and it is okay to release traffic.

## ***Walking Into the Road***

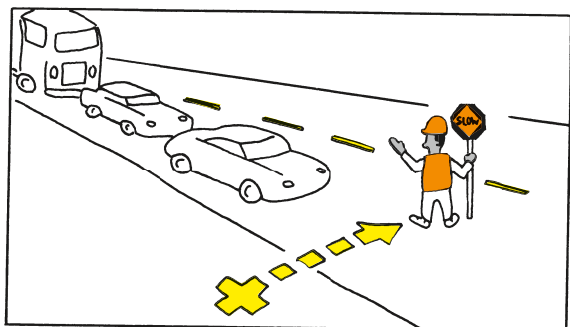
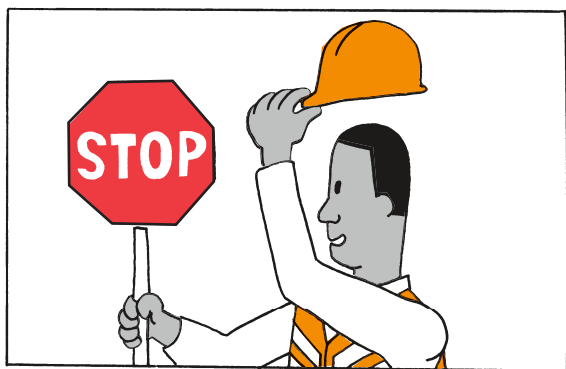
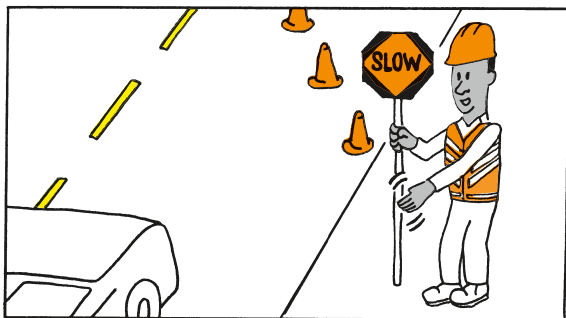
Normally after you have stopped the first vehicle, you will remain on the shoulder of the road. This is your normal flagging location. If additional vehicles arrive and they cannot clearly see your STOP paddle, then you may walk out to the center of the roadway so the additional traffic can see the STOP paddle.

Do not cross the center line and remember to watch out for traffic that may be coming from behind you.

When releasing traffic, move back to the shoulder with the paddle remaining on stop. Then, once on the shoulder, turn the paddle to SLOW and motion traffic into the open lane.

***Never stand in the path of oncoming traffic.***





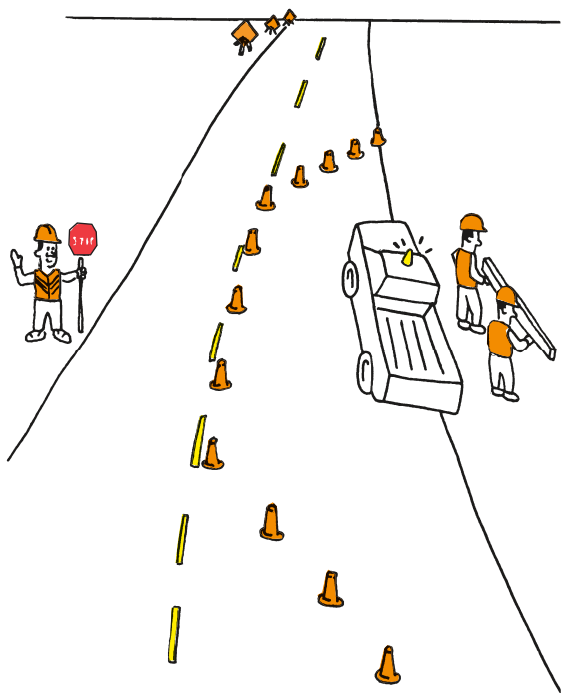
# Flagging Operations

## (1) Single Flagger

With a short work area on a straight, low-volume road, a single flagger can sometimes be used to control traffic.

The flagger must be visible to both directions of traffic.

Standing on the shoulder directly opposite the work area, the flagger directs traffic with the STOP/SLOW paddle. Wait until one direction of traffic has stopped before releasing the other direction.



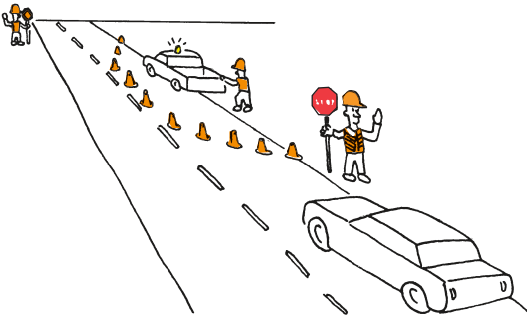
## (2) *Two-Flaggers*

This operation uses a flagger on each end of the work zone to control traffic flow. This is the most common flagging operation. One flagger should be designated as the lead flagger for coordinating the operation.

To be effective, flaggers must always be able to communicate with one another.

Communication can be maintained by:

- **Visual Contact** - effective when flaggers are close enough so that they can read each other's STOP/SLOW paddles and see each other's "all clear" signals.
- **Two-Way Radio** - the best means of communication, even when there is visual contact.
- **Flag Carrying** - the driver of the last vehicle passes a flag/token from one flagger to the other.



***Only after the "all clear" signal comes from the other flagger should you release traffic. If in doubt, stop all traffic!***

# Flagging Operations

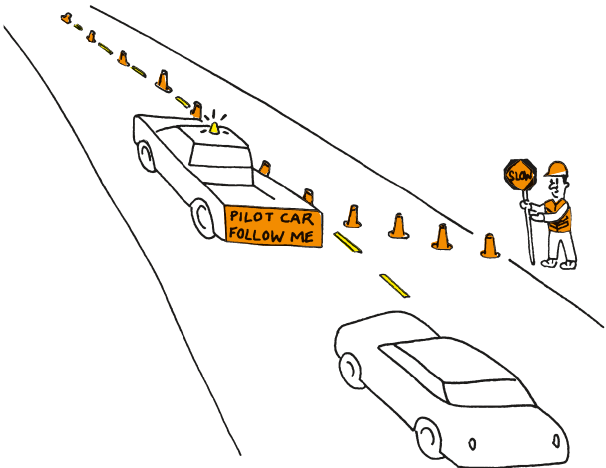
## (3) Pilot Car

A pilot car is used to guide a train of vehicles through a work area or detour. This operation uses a flagger at each end of the one lane section. Control of traffic at side roads and intersections also needs to be considered when using a pilot car.

This method works best when the route is particularly long or unclear for the motorist or where the work area changes so often that proper signing is difficult.

In this operation, the flaggers hold all traffic on each end of the work area until the pilot car arrives and leads the traffic through the work zone. Do not allow a late vehicle to try to catch up.

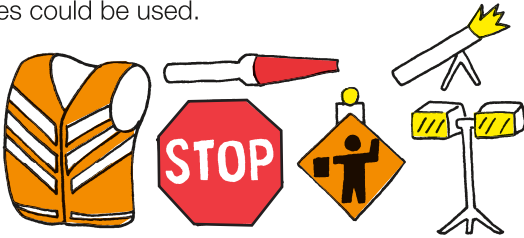
A safe turn-around location should be provided for the pilot car at each end of the work zone. Provisions should also be made for identification of the last vehicle in the column.



## (4) Night Flagging

Night flagging procedures are generally the same as daytime except for some equipment changes. A flashlight with glowcone, a retroreflectorized safety vest, and a retroreflectorized stop-slow paddle are required for nighttime flagging operations.

If possible, the flagger station should be lit by auxiliary lighting. Also, flashing yellow warning lights could be placed on the advance warning signs and flares could be used.



To stop vehicles, stand on the shoulder and face traffic with the stop sign in the right hand and flashlight with glowcone in the left hand.



Slowly wave the flashlight back and forth in front of your body. Don't let the arc extend beyond the base of the staff.

To release traffic, point from the driver to the open lane with the flashlight and hold in that position.



Do not wave the flashlight when releasing traffic - this may confuse the driver.

# Flagging Operations

## (5) One-Direction Control

This is when work vehicles occasionally block one lane of a two-lane road, such as when loading or unloading. A flagger can be used to control just one direction of traffic when the work needs to block the roadway. The other direction of traffic is not stopped.

Stop traffic in the usual manner, and release the vehicles when work does not block the lane.

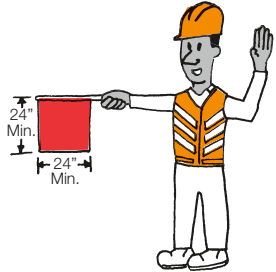
When releasing traffic, turn the paddle a quarter-turn so that the word stop faces you. This way, the stop message will not confuse the traffic coming from behind you.



## **(6) Emergency Flagging**

In an emergency, 24" x 24" red flags may be used to control traffic until STOP/SLOW paddles can be obtained. When used at night, flags shall be retroreflective.

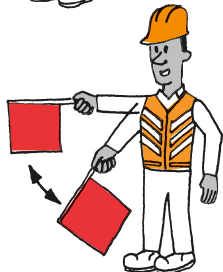
To stop traffic, stand on the shoulder of the road and extend the flag into the roadway. Raise your other hand to the stop position.



To release traffic, drop the flag to your side and with your free arm motion traffic to proceed. Do not use the flag to motion traffic through.



To alert and slow traffic, the flag should be waved from the ground to shoulder height.



***Replace flags with STOP/SLOW paddles as soon as they arrive.***

# *The Do's Of Flagging*

- Do** Stay alert at all times.
- Do** Use clear and deliberate hand signals when directing traffic.
- Do** Stand on the shoulder of the road out of the path of oncoming traffic.
- Do** Have a good idea of the day's work schedule to answer motorist's questions.
- Do** Treat motorists courteously.
- Do** Use proper equipment and warning signs.



- Do** Wear proper clothing.
- Do** Stand alone.
- Do** Plan an escape route, and report vehicles that violate the traffic controls.
- Do** Consult your flagger's hand book or your supervisor, if you have questions about your flagging duties.



# The Don'ts Of Flagging

- Don't** Stand in an open lane.
- Don't** Make unnecessary conversation with workers, pedestrians, or motorists.
- Don't** Give flagging directions against a traffic signal.
- Don't** Stand in the shade, over the crest of a hill, or around a sharp curve.
- Don't** Leave your station until properly relieved.
- Don't** Leave flagger signs in place when done flagging.
- Don't** Stand near equipment.
- Don't** Stand with a group of people.
- Don't** Daydream.
- Don't** Read while on duty.
- Don't** Bring radios or walkmans.



# ***Acknowledgements***

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