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# Work Zone General Information

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## A. Introduction

This section provides information on establishing temporary traffic control in work zones, addressing the safe and efficient accommodation of all road users: motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and those with special needs. The information presented is based on standards and guidance in the 2009 Edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). References to the MUTCD sign designations in this chapter are shown in parentheses, e.g. (W20-1).

Not all the recommendations in this chapter will apply to every circumstance faced by local agencies, and each unique situation may not be addressed. Modifications of the typical applications may be required to adapt to specific field conditions. Therefore, use engineering judgment, seeking the advice of experienced professionals and supervisors in difficult and complex interpretations. This information can be used as a reference for temporary traffic control in work zones on all city or county roadways. However, always check contract documents and local agency requirements for any pertinent modifications.

## B. Importance of Quality Traffic Control

The value of proper traffic control through work zones cannot be overemphasized. Three major reasons for providing quality temporary traffic control can be identified:

- 1. Safety:** Many crashes occur each year in Iowa work zones, resulting in death and injuries to motorists and workers. Appropriate levels of traffic control will help lessen the occurrence of work zone crashes.
- 2. Liability:** Improper use of temporary traffic control, deficiency of devices, or negligence may result in legal claims against a contractor, agency, or even individual workers. Complying with accepted standards and guidance could help avoid and reduce possible legal actions.
- 3. Responsibility:** Providing temporary traffic control in compliance with established practices is a requirement of the public trust; it's simply the right thing to do!

The MUTCD is incorporated into the Code of Federal Regulations and is recognized as the national standard for traffic control devices on all roads open to public travel in the nation. In addition, Iowa has adopted the MUTCD as the state standard (Iowa Code section 321.252 and Administrative Rule 761 - Chapter 130). Local agencies are required to adhere to the MUTCD requirements in Iowa Code Section 321.255. Always remember the MUTCD standard statements, "The responsibility for the design, placement, operation, maintenance, and uniformity of traffic control devices shall rest with the public agency or the official having jurisdiction," and "temporary traffic control plans and devices shall be the responsibility of the authority of a public body or official having jurisdiction for guiding road users." Even though the authority for placing temporary traffic control is sometimes granted to others (contractors, utilities, etc.), the responsibility for requiring properly signed work zones remains with the agency that has jurisdiction over that road or street.

## C. Applicable Standards and References

The MUTCD presents minimum standards only. Iowa has adopted the MUTCD as the official standard for traffic control, but many applications and practices in Iowa exceed national standards. The user should check for recent revisions of the MUTCD and state and local policies before selecting an appropriate application.

- 1. National Requirements:** Other important federal requirements and guidance are available in Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) *Standard Highway Signs* manual and the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances' *Uniform Vehicle Code*. Worker and flagger apparel recommendations and requirements from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) have been adopted into the MUTCD. Information about worker and flagger apparel can be found through the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA). Complying with the *Proposed Accessibility Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities in the Public Right-of-Way*, also known as the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines or PROWAG, is especially important when accommodating pedestrians. The US Access Board is an excellent source for background and supplemental accessibility information ([www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov)). The Institute of Transportation Engineers' *Traffic Control Devices Handbook* also provides valuable supplemental guidance.
- 2. State Requirements:** When working on or near any road or street right-of-way where Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) has jurisdiction, Iowa DOT requirements take precedence over this chapter.
- 3. Local Requirements:** Cities and counties may adopt ordinances and policies that apply to temporary traffic control - provided these meet or exceed the standards presented in the MUTCD. Verify local requirements before establishing any temporary traffic control on local roads and streets.

## D. Work Duration

Work duration is a major factor in determining the number and types of devices used in TTC zones. The duration of a TTC zone is defined relative to the length of time a work operation occupies a spot location. The five categories of work duration and their time at a location are:

- Long-term stationary is work that occupies a location more than 3 days.
- Intermediate-term stationary is work that occupies a location more than one daylight period up to 3 days, or nighttime work lasting more than 1 hour.
- Short-term stationary is daytime work that occupies a location for more than 1 hour within a single daylight period.
- Short duration is work that occupies a location up to 1 hour.
- Mobile is work that moves intermittently or continuously.