

Community Safety Leadership

Is this on your agenda?

School Crossing Guards



Munich Re America
Munich Re Group

Street Smart is Street Safe

A program to protect children and School Crossing Guards

Introduction

The position of School Crossing Guard has become one of the most dangerous occupations in municipal government. Each year, numerous crossing guards are seriously injured or killed at their posts while protecting our children. Over the last decade, the accident rate for crossing guards has increased 65%.

Thirty years ago, half of our children walked to school. Today, only 15% walk. As a result, our school zones are clogged with more traffic than they were designed to handle. Further, motorists are often in a hurry when they drop off or pick up their children...and too many parents are not paying attention because of cell phones and other distractions.

To address these issues, the MEL along with the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police has developed a comprehensive plan to protect children and school crossing guards. Also assisting in this effort was the New Jersey Network, the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey and Commerce Risk Control Services.

Steps to Reduce the Hazards for Children and School Crossing Guards

- **Training:** A new training video for School Crossing Guards has been produced to supplement the training provided by local police departments.
- **Traffic Calming:** Starting on page 1 is a discussion on steps you can take to reduce speeds in school zones and residential areas.
- **Public Awareness:** pages 2 and 3 are model press releases and newsletter articles. Also included with the training video is a public service announcement (PSA) prepared by New Jersey Network that you can use on your cable TV public access channel.
- **Medical Examinations:** Starting on page 4 is a model medical standard to test the hearing and eyesight of crossing guards.

For additional information, go to njmel.org

The Community Safety Leadership (CSL) program is a joint effort between the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL) and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJSLOM) to provide local officials with the information they need on safety and municipal liability issues. CSL publications are provided at no charge to all communities in the state.

Traffic Calming in School Zones

Because New Jersey has the highest population density of any state, it also has one of the highest vehicle and pedestrian accident rates. As a result, traffic accidents are the leading cause of fatalities among children. Senior citizens are also involved in a high rate of pedestrian accidents. Unfortunately, too often it takes a tragedy to galvanize a community into action.

Calming traffic in our communities must be given a high priority because high vehicle speeds put pedestrians at much greater risk. If a car going 20 MPH hits a pedestrian, there is a 95% chance of survival. However, the survival rate decreases to 45% at 30 MPH and less than 10% at 40 MPH.

A successful public safety program starts with local officials placing the issue on the monthly discussion agenda. Only the governing body can establish the necessary priority. The program must include engineering improvements, a public awareness campaign and police enforcement. It is also critical that the program be ongoing because new issues will constantly arise.

Establish a Citizens Advisory Committee for Public Safety to organize this effort. The committee should consist of a member of the governing body, a member of the board of education, the municipal manager/administrator, Chief of Police, DPW Superintendent, municipal engineer and a number of citizen volunteers.

Start by reviewing the traffic patterns around each school, all crossing guard posts and major walking routes. The committee should also seek input from Home and School Associations as well as neighborhood groups.

After the initial review, identify the greatest hazards and recommend appropriate improvements. It is critical to keep the governing body and board of education informed because ultimately they must make the budget appropriations. Also, work with the local press and other media to inform the public.



A driver feedback speed sign at a school-crossing zone.



A raised crosswalk in front of a middle school.

Public Awareness

Sample Press Release

MAYOR _____ ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM TO PROTECT SCHOOL CHILDREN AND CROSSING GUARDS

Mayor _____ has announced that the Police Department will implement the new **Street Smart is Street Safe** program to protect the safety of school children and School Crossing Guards.

According to Police Chief _____, the reasons for the high frequency of accidents involving school children and School Crossing Guards include:

- New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation, a situation made worse by the number of vehicles on the State's roads. For example, 30 years ago 50 percent of students walked or biked to school. Today, 85 percent are driven to school, resulting in congestion in school zones far beyond what the streets were designed to handle.
- Distracted drivers including people eating or drinking behind the wheel, using cell phones or simply not paying attention. There also are increasing incidents of aggressive driving. Unfortunately, most unsafe driving in school zones is by drivers who use the streets most often, the parents and grandparents dropping off or picking up children.

The program, which features a new training video for school crossing guards, was produced by the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL) and the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police.

Chief _____ requested that any person seeing an incident of unsafe driving, including double parking, or unsafe conditions, such as blocking the view of a crossing guard, should notify the police department (telephone number) as soon as it is practical.

Mayor _____ also announced that a Citizens Advisory Committee for Public Safety will be formed to provide support for the School Crossing Guard safety effort, reflecting the broad community involvement needed to protect children and crossing guards.

The Committee will consist of a member of the governing body, a member of the board of education, the municipal manager/administrator, the Chief of Police, the DPW superintendent, the municipal engineer and a number of civilian volunteers. Citizens wishing to participate should call the Mayor (or designee) at (telephone number).

Sample Newsletter Article

STREET SMART IS STREET SAFE!

We need the help of every citizen to protect our school children and school crossing guards. Tragically, the pedestrian accident rate has significantly increased statewide:

- New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation, a situation made worse by the number of vehicles on the State's roads. For example, 30 years ago 50 percent of students walked to school. Today, 85 percent are driven to school, resulting in congestion in school zones far beyond what the streets were designed to handle.
- Too many drivers are distracted by eating or drinking behind the wheel, using cell phones or simply not paying attention. There also are increasing incidents of aggressive driving. Unfortunately, most unsafe driving in school zones is by drivers who use the streets most often, the parents and grandparents dropping off or picking up children.

See children ahead? Don't assume they know you are coming, even if they are looking right at you. Children and senior citizens lack auditory localization – the ability to locate a moving object by hearing it. That's why children and older people are far more likely to be involved in pedestrian accidents.

Accidents involving children are especially common where there are parked cars that block driver's vision of children darting into the street. Accidents involving senior citizens are more common at intersections because older people take longer to cross.

Many people aren't even aware how fast they are going. If a car going 20 MPH hits a pedestrian, there is a 95% chance of survival. However, the survival rate declines to 45% at 30MPH and less than 10% at 40 MPH.

To address this problem, _____(town name) has formed a Citizens Advisory Committee for Public Safety consisting of member of the governing body, a member of the board of education, the municipal manager/administrator, the Chief of Police, the DPW superintendent, the municipal engineer and a number of civilian volunteers. Citizens wishing to participate should call (telephone number).

Also, in response to a statewide 65 percent increase in accidents involving crossing guards over the past 10 years, The Police Department is implementing the new **Street Smart is Street Safe** training program aimed at crossing guards. The program, which features a new training video for school crossing guards, was produced by the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL) and the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police. Creating a safe working environment for crossing guards helps assure the safety of the children.

Any person seeing an incident of unsafe driving, including double parking, or unsafe conditions, such as blocking the view of a crossing guard, is urged to notify the police department (telephone number) as soon as it is practical.

Medical Standards

Crossing guard candidates should complete the same medical history and physical examination required for pre-placement examinations designed for other municipal full-time positions. The examination should be repeated as follows:

- Up to age 39: every five years
- From 40 to 49: every two years
- 50 +: every year

The physical examination, vision and hearing tests should be conducted in a clinical setting by a physician with experience examining job applicants. To perform the functions of the crossing guard position, the applicant must be capable of standing for two hours or more at a time and be able to lift and hold in position a stop sign weighing approximately one pound while holding the opposite hand in an upright, raised position. The examining physician should be provided a job description listing the physical requirements for the position.

If abnormalities or deficiencies are identified as a result of the physical examination including vision and hearing tests, the candidate is not qualified for the position. As an option, candidates not meeting the standards can be referred to an appropriate specialist for further examination to determine their physical capacity to perform the duties of the position. If this option is pursued, the specialist must be provided with the results of first examination and the standards that are to be met. Until the specialist report is received, the candidate should not be permitted to serve as a crossing guard. If the specialist report confirms the earlier testing outcomes, the candidate is not qualified to serve as a crossing guard.

Vision Standards and Recommended Tests

1. Peripheral Vision

Visual field shall be 160 degrees in the horizontal meridian binocularly with or without correction. Any perimeter that can measure the horizontal field of vision can serve as the testing method. The extent of the visual field shall be determined along the horizontal meridian for each eye with a perimeter (confrontation fields are not acceptable.) Values less than 160 degrees are acceptable only if complete compensation occurs with the opposite eye in binocular viewing. Any central absolute scotoma must be completely compensated by the opposite eye.

2. Stereopsis

Using either the Titmus test (TST) or the Rand Dot Stereo test (RST) or the Randot E test: TST Wirt Circle #8 (50 seconds of disparity) RST or RDE Target #6 (50 seconds of disparity). Subject must identify which object stands out from the page wearing Polaroid eyeglasses.

3. Color Vision

In response to one of the following three editions of the Ishihara Pseudoisochromatic Plate Screening test, with the testing conducted one plate at a time, the applicant should achieve the following results:

- 38 plate edition: The first 21 plates - 9 errors or less. An individual who misses the first plate has failed.
- 24 plate edition: The first 15 plates - 6 errors or less
- 16 plate edition: The first 9 plates - 4 errors or less

4. Visual Acuity

The applicant must be able to read 20/30 letters with the dominant eye on the Standard Snellen optotype chart. The non-dominant eye must have 20/40 or better with best correction. The applicant is asked to read the smallest line of letters that can be read with one eye covered. This is repeated with the opposite eye covered. An applicant wearing contact lenses must meet the visual acuity standard with their contact lenses in place. A statement from the applicant's eye care professional must be presented confirming that contact lenses have been worn successfully for a minimum of four months.

Hearing Standards and Recommended Tests

The candidate must be tested in a sound booth. Both the sound booth and audiometer used for testing should be calibrated using the most recent ANSI standards, and have been calibrated within the past year. Calibration certificates should be on file and available for review.

Candidates qualify if they meet standards with or without amplification.

The crossing guard hearing standards are as follows:

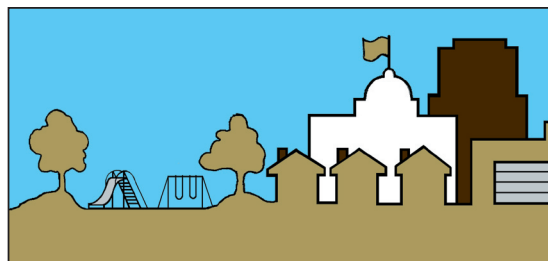
- Hearing thresholds of 40dB or better in each ear at 500, 1K, and 2 KHz.
- Pure tone average thresholds at 500, 1K and 2K Hz 35dB or better in each ear.
- The hearing threshold at 4K Hz must be 45dB or better in each ear.

Nine Easy Ways To Make Safety a Priority

Your municipality can reduce its accident rate by:

- Requiring that a formal safety program be in place and that its status be a recurring item on the governing body's regular workshop agenda;
- Committing to making municipal safety - for both residents and workers - a priority;
- Comparing your safety record to other towns;
- Determining how your safety program is structured and how it can be improved;
- Tracking your safety record to see if it's improving;
- Requiring monthly meetings of your community safety committee, focusing on public safety as well as municipal employee safety;
- Publishing the safety committee's minutes and distributing them to the governing body;
- Communicating potential hazards with your work force and encouraging them to share this information with you as well;
- Having a mechanism in place for employees and residents to report unsafe conditions and a procedure for remedying them on a priority basis.

If you want to serve on the steering committee or have questions regarding the CSL Program or suggestions for improving it, please contact us at (201) 587-0555.



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Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund

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