



Kansas LTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Road & Bridge Agencies

Flagger Training and Certification: What's Required in Kansas?

By Mehrdad Givechi and Lisa Harris



The safety of the flaggers, their fellow workers and the travelling public depends on flaggers performing their duties properly. An effective flagging operation is not something that just happens. It is the result of proper work zone design, proper training, and proper flagging procedures. Do you know the regulations or guidelines that pertain to flaggers working for cities, counties and townships in Kansas? This article provides a refresher on those, and information on where to find flagger training.

Currently there is no state law or regulation in Kansas mandating flagger training and certification. However, flaggers and their supervisors must follow the requirements (and should follow the guidelines) that apply to flaggers listed in the MUTCD—a federal publication that is recognized as the national standard governing the design and use of all types of traffic control devices. The MUTCD does not mandate training or certification, but training is certainly a good way for work crews to get the information they need to follow the MUTCD. KDOT has its own internal requirement that flaggers who work on the state system—KDOT employees or contractors—must take flagger training and earn and carry a KDOT flagger card.

KDOT's work zone training is going to become more formal soon. Kristi Ericksen, KDOT work zone engineer, said that KDOT is in the early stages of developing requirements

for temporary traffic control (TTC) training at all levels of responsibility at a work zone, including flaggers. KDOT will eventually pre-qualify courses that a flagger can take, but for now flaggers must receive some form of training that uses KDOT training materials—and provides a certification. KDOT accepts any flagger course taught by anyone as long as the material covered in the KDOT Flagger Handbook and video are included in the instruction. KDOT posts these and other flagger training materials for free download at <http://www.ksdot.org/hwycont.asp>.

KDOT flagger cards do not have expiration dates, but that will eventually change with the coming KDOT TTC training requirements, Ericksen said. Anyone who might be asked to flag must then carry a valid certification card. Many different KDOT employees at various levels inspect TTC areas and can ask to see the certification cards of active flaggers, Ericksen said. The time period for how long a flagger card would be valid before it expires is currently being worked out by KDOT.

Where to find flagger training

A number of organizations provide training for flaggers, with courses offered both online or taught in classrooms by certified instructors.

ATSSA. The American Traffic Safety Services Association is one of the main sources for training. Their online courses typically last for 4 hours and can be taken any time. Visit <http://www.atssa.com/TrainingCertification/StateTrainingRequirements.aspx>.

ATSSA also trains instructors to teach their flagger course. The instructors can then offer and schedule the course face-to-face. In Kansas, ATSSA's instructor-led training varies in frequency from month-to-month and year-to-year, depending on the demand. Currently there are 31 ATSSA-certified instructors in Kansas offering both state- and non-state-specific flagger training courses. To see a list of flagger training courses offered in each state, go to their map at <http://www.atssa.com/TrainingCertification/CourseInformation.aspx>. ATSSA also lists certified flaggers



and certified instructors at their website.

ARTBA. Certified flagger training with accreditation is also available from ARTBA (the American Road and Transportation Builders Association) through a partnership with the National Safety Council. <http://www.artba.org/safety/work-zone-clearinghouse/>.

KWORCC. Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties, in cooperation with their sister pool, KCAMP (Kansas County Association Multi-line Pool)—an insurance and risk management agency—advertises online work zone safety training to its member counties. The work zone course is offered in the spring and summer. Check out KWORCC’s course list here:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/ulearn/images/portal_images/kworcc/course_list.pdf.

What should be included in flagger training?

Training should cover, at minimum, the requirements and guidelines for flagger operation contained in the MUTCD. Flagging operations are listed in Part 6, Sec. 6E (2009) and cover the following topics, in general:

- **The right flagger** (that is, the right temperament and skill set). The flagger is in contact with the public more than anyone else on the job. The attitude and appearance directly affects the public’s view of the operation. The flagger’s responsibilities are critical for keeping the work zone safe.

According to the MUTCD’s recommended guidance in Section 6E.01, a flagger should have the:

- Ability to receive and communicate specific instructions clearly, firmly and courteously;
- Ability to move and maneuver quickly in order to avoid danger from errand vehicles;
- Ability to control signaling devices such as paddles and flags in order to provide clear and positive guidance to drivers

MUTCD Pop Quiz on Flagging

Are these required by the MUTCD? (yes or no). See answers on page 13.

- 1) A flagger must identify an escape route in case of an errant vehicle.
- 2) Nighttime illumination of flagging stations.
- 3) A stop-slow paddle or automated flagger devices in addition to hand signals.
- 4) Only a certain size and colors of flags, if flags are used.
- 5) High visibility apparel with specific color, coverage, and retroreflectivity.
- 6) An 8 ft. high staff for a stop/slow paddle.
- 7) Flaggers to face road users when actively flagging.
- 8) An approximately 44 inch long staff attached to a flag, if a flag is used.
- 9) Stop/slow paddle face to be 24 inches across.

approaching the work zone in frequently changing situations; —Ability to understand and apply safe traffic control practices, sometimes in stressful or emergency situations; and —Ability to recognize dangerous traffic situations and warn workers in sufficient time to avoid injury.

- **The right gear** (high-visibility safety apparel).
- **The right devices** (hand signals and other control devices).
- **The right practices** (flagger procedures).
- **The right set-up** (flagger stations and sign spacing).

Different types of flagging set-ups serve different needs, depending on traffic volume, the space requirements for the road work, nighttime work, and more.

Are your flaggers well trained? With all the resources out there, and some of them online, it’s easier than ever to get your flaggers the safety information they need for their work. ■

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Flagger Training Videos on YouTube:

- **VDOT Flagger Training.** December 2013 (19 min). Virginia DOT. www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfeOpp1bKXs
- **The Basics for Work Zone Flaggers.** Vermont Agency of Transportation. June 2012 (21 min). www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5g7ndn7ySM
- **Flagging Operation and Procedures.** May 2011 (18 min). Minnesota DOT. www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iR0AgqvZ-k
- **Flagger Safety from SafetyInstruction.com,** OSHA Safety Training, July 2009 (3 min). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrwPN63n7K8>

Sources:

- Email correspondence with Norm Bowers on July 21, 2014 and August 10, 2014.
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 Edition, Part 6, Section 6E. <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009/part6.pdf>.
- National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse. <http://www.artba.org/safety/work-zone-clearinghouse/>.
- “Know Flagging” poster, American Road & Transportation Builder Association (ARTBA).
- ATSSA Flagger training web page. <http://www.atssa.com/TrainingCertification/ATSSAOnlineFlaggerTraining.aspx>.