



## CROSSING GUARDS: RECENT TRAGEDIES HIGHLIGHTS THE CRITICAL NEED FOR ACTION

The recent tragic deaths of two New Jersey crossing guards in late 2024 is a stark reminder of the need to prioritize traffic safety initiatives while focusing on the well-being of crossing guards.<sup>1</sup> The crossing guard position can be extraordinarily dangerous. These individuals play a vital role in ensuring the safety of pedestrians, especially children, as they navigate busy streets, and appropriate risk mitigation strategies must be employed to enhance everyone's safety.

This bulletin identifies key resources to assist in creating a culture of safety for crossing guards. Furthermore, some agencies have contracted with private entities to provide crossing guards in their communities, and this bulletin provides essential considerations for law enforcement agencies who contract with private entities for crossing guard services.

The New Jersey Department of Labor has launched a [Statewide Initiative to Bolster the Safety Standards for School Crossing Guards](#) and issued a New Jersey Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Alert, [Preventing Crossing Guard Injuries and Deaths](#), in response to the recent tragedies involving crossing guards.

It is imperative the Chief of Police utilizes or designates appropriate agency personnel to utilize the [MEL Safety Institute Crossing Guards Resources](#) to:

- Develop a training program.
- Document required and other training.
- Provide mandated and recommended equipment.
- Implement a policy governing the crossing guard function.
- Develop a specific job description for crossing guards.
- Ensure Job Safety Observations are completed, documented, and discussed at the agency's safety committee meeting.
- Establish a medical review program.
- Increase public awareness and develop a safety program.

Chiefs of Police should also:

- Review the six-minute video [Crossing Guard Safety Resources](#), which describes the many resources available to improve safety.
- Direct designated members of their agency to complete the New Jersey Safe Routes to [School Crossing Guard Train-the-Trainer Program](#).
- Utilize this as an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the many PEOSH requirements concerning law enforcement, which can be found [here](#).

## **Crossing Guard Staffing by Private Contractors**

Local communities that utilize a private contractor to staff crossing guard positions should discuss any such agreements with their municipal attorney, be aware that [NJS Title 40](#) designates the responsibility of oversight of crossing guards to the Chief of Police, and take necessary action to ensure the crossing guard posts, training of guards, and other essential actions are included as part of an overall community safety initiative.

### **Critical Safety Considerations for the Chief of Police:**

- Remain collaboratively engaged in the process of determining appropriate crossing guard post locations by communicating with school officials and the private contractor. Although a private contractor might be staffing the positions, local law enforcement should continue to play an essential role in keeping community members safe, including crossing guards, parents, and children.
- Request a copy of the training records of any crossing guard working in the municipality even though the private contractor employs them.
- Establishing a review program of the crossing guard post locations and utilize the [Annual Review of School Crossing Guard Program and Post Form](#). The task of ensuring crossing guard posts is free of hazards and have adequate signage, highway markings, and more should be a task that is regularly completed by or governed by the police department.
- Determine who is responsible for conducting [Job Safety Observations](#) and how any identified suggestions for improvement can be discussed at the police department's safety committee meeting.
- Implement a safety campaign in the community concerning school transportation safety, including crossing guard safety.
- Modify the agency Crossing Guard Policy, as necessary, to reflect the use of a private contractor for staffing crossing guard posts. It is essential that agencies continue to have a Crossing Guard Policy even when the staffing has been outsourced to a private vendor. A sample Crossing Guard Policy is available [here](#).
- Determine how crossing guards will report an emergency at their post while ensuring each crossing guard has a cell phone or other communications equipment.
- Determine how and to whom crossing guards report motor vehicles that violate traffic laws or children or parents who fail to comply with traffic laws or directions from the crossing guard.
- Determine how complaints will be handled concerning a crossing guard's performance or demeanor, including how such issues are reported, the investigation process, and how the final outcome is conveyed to the police department.
- Discuss with the municipal attorney the development of an appropriate contract or agreement with the vendor that is approved by the governing body. Some considerations when developing a contract or agreement:
  - Describe in detail the types and frequency of completed employee background checks, including queries of the sex offender registry as permitted. For example, consideration should be given to ensure background checks are completed not only at the onset of employment but at agreed upon pre-determined intervals. Chiefs of Police should also consider querying their own internal records, as appropriate, in addition to the background checks completed by the vendor.
  - Determine the appropriate costs of the program.

- Determine and delineate the specific tasks that are required of crossing guards as codified in a job description. A sample job description is available [here](#).
- Discuss and define what medical testing will be required and who is responsible for any costs. Sample medical requirements can be found [here](#).
- Include in the agreement that all crossing guards must complete the [MEL Safety Institute Protecting Children From Abuse](#) training.
- Define the locations that a crossing guard shall staff, how they will be supervised, and who is responsible for when a guard is unable to report to a post.
- Detail the type and duration of all training provided and the availability of such training records.
- Delineate the type, quantity, and style of apparel and equipment, including a reflective safety vest, inclement weather gear, hat, badge, and stop paddle that meets or exceeds current PEOSH standards.
- Determine and detail who is responsible for the repair or replacement of damaged uniforms or equipment.
- The municipal attorney should review the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund [Third Party Provider Insurance Guidelines](#) and consult with their Risk Management Consultant to determine and define appropriate insurance coverages in the agreement.

<sup>1</sup>Bichao, S. (2024, December 8). *Another New Jersey Crossing Guard Killed: Worker, 74, Dies a Hero Saving Kids*. Retrieved from NJ101.5: <https://nj1015.com/hero-crossing-guard-dies-saving-students/>