

SWAT Bulletin

Safety for Workers and Traffic

Number 2, September 2005

High Visibility Clothing

High visibility clothing in good condition is important to alert motorists that there are workers on, or near, the road. It assists to create a safer workplace for employees.

Workers on, or near the road, complete tasks which include plumbing connections, tree planting and pruning, unloading vehicles and repairing roads.

The Worksite Safety – Traffic Management Code of Practice (clauses 66 to 71) states that high visibility clothing should comply with AS 1742.3.

AS 1742.3, the Australian Standard Manual of uniform traffic control devices states that “high visibility clothing meeting the requirements of AS/NZS 4602 for Types D, N or D/N garments shall be worn by all personnel working in or adjacent to traffic, including traffic at work sites, in quarries and on construction haul roads.” (clause 3.16.5)

What types are there?

AS 4602, High Visibility Safety Garments, notes three different classifications for garments.

A short description of each classification, with some indicative illustrations -

Class D

Outdoor daytime use only.
Fluorescent or other non-retroreflective¹ high visibility material.



Class N

Night time use only.
Retroreflective material on a 'non-specified' background.



Class D/N

Day or night use.
Combination of fluorescent and retroreflective material.



Where retroreflective strips are applied to a garment, they should be 50 mm wide (not 25 mm).

What type should I be using?

There are many different products available, including clothing with high visibility panels, safety vests, and overalls / jump suits.

Before purchasing a garment, a risk assessment should be conducted. Typical items to consider will include when and where the clothing will be worn, and what work tasks are to be completed.

Environmental factors may include:

- Temperature (heat / cold)
- Lighting and visibility (day / night / artificial / twilight / rain / fog)

Task factors may include ensuring that:

- A non-flammable garment is worn whilst completing hot works.
- Works being undertaken near rail lines meet the specific requirements for this application.

It is also important to remember to check that the vest being worn does not blend in with background colours.

Do our garments meet the Australian Standard?

Check with the supplier that the garment meets the requirements of AS 4602 and AS 1906. In general AS 4602 specifies the garment types, areas of fabric which are required for visibility, etc, whereas AS 1906.4² specifies the criteria for the performance of the materials used.

Must I wear a “VicRoads orange vest”?

Traditionally in Victoria, a “VicRoads orange vest”³ has been used when completing roadwork activities. The Code of Practice for WorkSite Safety – Traffic Management now refers to garments meeting the Australian Standards instead.

Of course, VicRoads or any other principal or company may specify in their contract or agreement that a particular type of high visibility clothing must be worn whilst completing work. Check that you are not under any contractual obligations before purchasing.

Care / handling / storage?

Check with the supplier as to how the garments should be laundered, and stored in order to ensure that they are useful safety equipment for as long as possible. High visibility clothing should be inspected to ensure that it is in good condition.

What will WorkSafe inspectors be doing?

During the SWAT campaign, inspectors are conducting inspections of roadside worksites. Whilst on site, inspectors are checking on traffic management controls including advance warning for motorists, signage, delineation of the worksite and work zone separation.

If the high visibility clothing being worn by employees on site is in poor condition, or not being worn correctly, or not being worn where it should be, WorkSafe inspectors will require this to be rectified as soon as feasible.

Where can I find out more about SWAT?

Check out the traffic management page accessible from www.workcover.vic.gov.au

Send an email to construction@workcover.vic.gov.au

¹ A “retroreflective” material is one that reflects light back.
Graphics courtesy of 3M Australia.

² AS 1906.4 is titled Retroreflective materials and devices for road traffic control purposes Part 4: High-visibility materials for safety garments.

³ A “VicRoads orange vest” has orange fluorescent material with retroreflective strips in a particular layout.