



SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD BRIEF GUIDE



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I. Introduction

This resource is intended to help schools, school districts, law enforcement agencies, and other entities better understand the roles, rules, and guidance for crossing guard selection, placement, training, and uniform. This information may help create a safe and effective crossing guard program.

Throughout this guide, references are made to the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MN MUTCD). This manual contains standards for traffic control devices that regulate, warn and guide road users along all roadways within the State of Minnesota.

II. What types of crossing supervision can I provide?

There are three types of crossing supervision (MN MUTCD Section 7D.1):

1. Adult crossing guards, who can control vehicles and pedestrians
2. Uniformed law enforcement officers, who can control vehicles and pedestrians
3. Student and/or parent safety patrols, who can only control pedestrians, not vehicles (and therefore are primarily utilized at stop-controlled intersections only)

This guide focuses on adult crossing guards.

III. Which locations require an Adult Crossing Guard?

When the traffic flow does not provide gaps long enough for a student to safely cross, students may become impatient and endanger themselves by attempting to cross when there is an insufficient gap. In these instances, traffic gaps may need to be created to accommodate crossing demands (MN MUTCD Section 7A.3). Adult crossing guards may be used to provide gaps in traffic at school crossings where an engineering study has shown that adequate gaps must be created and where authorized by law (MN MUTCD Section 7D.2).

When identifying adult crossing guard locations, consider:

- The age of the students who are crossing. Generally, younger students need more time to cross the street and have a more difficult time judging vehicle speed and distance.
- The width of the street and the number of lanes students must cross. Multiple lanes or wide streets may require more than one crossing guard.
- The sight distance at the crossing. Are there obstructions that block drivers or pedestrians from safely being able to watch for gaps in traffic?
- Presence of other traffic control devices. Are there traffic controls such as stop signs or red lights, and pedestrian signage to indicate the presence of pedestrians? If traffic controls and pedestrian warning signs are sufficient, then a crossing guard may be better utilized at another location, or consider using student and/or parent safety patrols at these intersections.
- The speed of vehicles at the crossing. Cars traveling at faster speeds require more distance to come to a complete stop. If crossing a road with high speeds, consider placing the crossing location where drivers have received advanced warning that they may be required to stop (ex: pedestrian ahead signage, stop ahead signage, etc.)
- Attendance boundaries and existing walking routes. Are students currently utilizing the crossing? How many students would be impacted?
- Crash history of the crossing. The number, type of crash, and time of day that crashes occur may lead to stationing a crossing guard at one location over another.

WHAT ARE THE STATE'S LAWS REGARDING CROSSING GUARDS?

The 2014 Minnesota Statute 169.21 states that it is unlawful for any person to drive a motor vehicle through a crossing when school children are crossing or past a member of a school safety patrol or adult crossing guard, while the member of the school safety patrol or adult crossing guard is directing the movement of children across a street and while the school safety patrol member or adult crossing guard is holding an official signal in the stop position.

A person who violates this subdivision is guilty of a misdemeanor. A person who violates this subdivision a second or subsequent time within one year of a previous conviction under this subdivision is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.



IV. What is the role of an Adult Crossing Guard?

The primary purpose of a school crossing guard is to assist children in safely crossing the street at assigned times and locations. In addition, the presence of a school crossing guard can:

- Encourage safe crossing behaviors in children
- Provide education and reinforcement of safe pedestrian behavior
- Stop traffic for the children when natural traffic flow does not allow enough time for children to cross safely
- Alert motorists that pedestrians are crossing in the vicinity
- Observe and report incidents, conditions, or behaviors that create safety hazards

V. How do you choose Adult Crossing Guards?

High standards for selection of adult crossing guards are essential because they are responsible for the safety of and the efficient crossing of the street by schoolchildren within and in the immediate vicinity of school crosswalks. MN MUTCD Section 7D.3 provides guidance on minimum qualifications for adult crossing guards:

- Good physical condition, including sight and hearing. This is especially important because Crossing Guards will need to identify safe gaps in traffic and should be able to stand for long periods of time outdoors. Crossing Guards should also have the physical ability to control a STOP paddle effectively to provide approaching road users with a fully direct view of the paddle's STOP message during the entire crossing movement.
- The ability to communicate instructions clearly, firmly, and courteously. Since Crossing Guards will be giving students directions, it's important that the Crossing Guard is able to speak the language spoken by the majority of students.
- Average intelligence, mental alertness, a neat appearance, good character, and dependability. Crossing Guards need the ability to recognize potentially dangerous traffic situations and warn and manage students in sufficient time to avoid injury.
- An overall sense of responsibility for the safety of students.
- Completion of an official training program.

VI. What does an official Crossing Guard training program include?

Training methods should include both classroom instruction and field exercises. Establishing a partnership with the local law enforcement agency may help add validity to the training program. Trainings should instruct on:

- The basic traffic laws of the community
- School zone signage and pavement markings
- Proper use of traffic signs, signals, and safety equipment
- Methods of signaling drivers and taking advantage of traffic gaps
- Crossing procedures and ways to teach them to children
- Site-specific traffic factors and potential traffic hazards
- Professional work responsibilities
- Proper attire and positive behavior
- Emergency procedures and procedures for vehicle crashes
- Health and welfare policies including visibility, sun protection, hydration, etc.



VII. What are the operating procedures for Crossing Guards?

Adult Crossing Guards shall not direct traffic in the usual law enforcement sense (MN MUTCD Section 7D.5). Instead, Crossing Guards shall pick opportune times to create the gaps in traffic. At these times, the Crossing Guard will stand in the middle of the road to signal that pedestrians are about to cross and that vehicles must stop.

A. *What is the Crossing Guard uniform?*

Adult Crossing Guards and law enforcement officers shall wear high-visibility retro-reflective safety apparel (apparel must be labeled as ANSI 107-2004 standard performance for Class 2) when performing school crossing supervision (MN MUTCD Section 7D.4). These vests help to make the Crossing Guard easily identifiable by the general public, and help ensure they're visible to motorists.

B. *What equipment does a Crossing Guard need?*

Crossing Guards shall use a STOP paddle as the primary hand-signaling device (MN MUTCD Section 7D.5). The paddle shall be red, octagonal shaped, be at least 18 inches in size, have the word STOP on both sides of the paddle, and have STOP written with at least 6 inch white letters. If used in the dark, the paddle must be retro-reflective or illuminated. If flashing lights are used on the STOP paddle, the flash rate shall be at least 50, but no more than 60, flash periods per minute.

VIII. How are Crossing Guard programs funded?

Stable funding is often a prerequisite to implementing and operating a Crossing Guard program. Funding may be required for crossing guard salaries, training programs, uniforms, etc. Some funding sources may include:

- Local taxes
- Local school boards
- Sheriff's or police departments
- Public works departments
- Traffic engineering departments
- Surcharges on school zone traffic violations
- Private funding
- PTAs or PTOs
- Volunteer crossing guards
- SRTS grants



Sources:

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