

STOP for the Crossing Guards...as well as the Students

“It was raining really hard and visibility wasn’t great, and I saw her step off the curb, and I slammed on the brakes. I couldn’t stop, and it went right over her.”

News article quoting an SUV driver who struck and killed a school crossing guard.



The Challenge

This incident was one of 14 school crossing guard fatalities identified by the New Jersey Fatality Assessment & Control Evaluation (NJ FACE) Project in New Jersey from 1993 to 2008. All 14 were struck by motor vehicles. Many more were seriously injured, often requiring an extensive recovery period. In a crosswalk, crossing guards are just as vulnerable to motor vehicle injuries as the students they are protecting. In New Jersey, school crossing guards are employed and trained by the municipality’s police department.

The Response

After investigating this work-related fatality, NJ FACE initiated a statewide occupational health surveillance intervention project to prevent motor vehicle injuries in this occupation. The program developed a hazard alert, entitled “Crossing Guards – Be Seen, Be Safe,” which included job training requirements, safe work practice recommendations, and recommended and mandated personal protective equipment (PPE) to increase worker visibility. All partners including the NJ State Association of Chiefs of Police reviewed and endorsed the alert. An educational packet was mailed to all 534 NJ police departments that included multiple copies of the alert for distribution to crossing guard employees and a feedback survey. Police Chiefs who responded to the survey were receptive to the recommendations in the alert and provided useful feedback. A follow-up mailing of the alert, which was updated based on survey responses, was conducted about one year after the initial mailing, and recipients were again asked to provide feedback, including information about changes made as a result of the first mailing.

The Impact

NJ FACE received requests for over 1,300 additional copies of the alert. Some police departments issued the alert with employees’ paychecks. The respondents to the follow-up survey reported adding or improving the PPE for their school crossing guards including ANSI Class 2 safety vest, retro reflective gloves, whistle, and a distinctive uniform/badge.

NJ FACE continues to participate in various forums involving school crossing guards’ safety and has developed a website dedicated to this topic. The NJ FACE outreach has provided the impetus for the development of a statewide uniform crossing guard training curriculum in collaboration with various stakeholders.

For more information, visit the NJ Department of Health’s adult school crossing guards topic page at: http://nj.gov/health/surv/crossing_guards.shtml