

High-visibility Vest Update

The chapter on safety (Chapter 7) of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations 2010 edition, contains language on requirements for the use of high visibility apparel:

High Visibility Vests

In order to meet 23 CFR 634, high visibility apparel should be worn whenever a firefighter is working on or in the right of way of a public roadway, unless there is a reasonable chance that the employee will be exposed to flames, high heat or hazardous materials, or if the safety apparel hinders the firefighter's ability to do his or her job.

Employees must wear high visibility safety apparel that meets ANSI/ISEA 107, Class 2 or 3.

Apparel that meets ANSI/ISEA 107 currently does not meet the flame resistance requirements of the NFPA Standard on Protective Clothing and Equipment for Wildland Fire Fighting. The high visibility safety apparel should not be worn if:

- There is a reasonable chance that the employee may be exposed to flames, high heat or hazardous materials.
- The high visibility garment hinders an employee's ability to do their job because it prevents necessary motion or because it limits access to necessary equipment such as radios or fire shelters.

The publication of the 2009 edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) changes the rules slightly. The new edition, effective January 15, 2010, incorporates the 23 CFR 634 regulations and provides another option allowing first responders and law enforcement personnel to use a second type of vest. It now allows safety apparel meeting a newly-developed ANSI standard for high-visibility public safety vests (ANSI/ISEA 207-2006), because this type of vest will better meet the special needs of these personnel. The ANSI/ISEA 207 standard was developed for first responders and law enforcement personnel who must carry equipment, such as firearms, on their belts. ANSI/ISEA 207 allows garments with less background material, so shorter vests which enable easier access to equipment will meet the standard.

The Missoula Technology and Development Center is working to provide additional guidelines for complying with these regulations. That information should be available by the end of 2010.