

## **The Keys to Selecting High Visibility Apparel - Compliance, Comfort, Affordability and Practicality - Published in ISHN Magazine**

The new Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) 2009 revision requires that all workers within the right of way or work zone must wear high visibility apparel that meets ANSI 107 Performance Class 2 or Class 3 standards.

By December 31, 2010, all states must in substantial compliance - on all roads, not just federal-aid highways.

Providing compliant high visibility apparel is one thing, but making sure workers wear it properly - or at all - is another. If high visibility garments are uncomfortable, don't fit as they should, or don't look good, it is much more difficult to get workers to wear them.

Fortunately, high visibility apparel has come a long way since the days of the one-size-fits-all pullover orange vest. Today manufacturers have created a wide array of new and innovative products that increase comfort and increase compliance.

Manufacturers have realized that high visibility apparel does not have to be worn over traditional work wear. Instead it can take the place of traditional work wear. They have looked at the materials and designs used for sports and recreation clothing, and combined those with the needs for work wear. The result is that high visibility apparel product offerings with improved comfort and style.

### **More Comfort, More Compliance**

Class 2 and 3 T-shirts made of Birds Eye polyester can be made with high wicking, moisture management material. The material keeps workers cooler and eliminates the need to wear a vest. For years many employers would give workers t-shirts with a logo, and then give them a vest to wear over it. Now they can wear ANSI 107 compliant t-shirts with a logo to eliminate wearing a vest.

Pullover and zipper front sweat shirts that conform to ANSI 107 are now available for cooler weather. Often, workers don't close the front of a vest or jacket, which reduces its high visibility protection. T-shirts and pullover sweat shirts solve the problem.

High visibility softshell jackets can be made from the same materials used by hikers, mountain bikers and skiers. Softshell material is ideal for a wide variety work environments. The jackets are water resistant, windproof, breathable, light weight, and durable. They also have a layer of fleece bonded to the material to provide warmth. Other popular products include insulated winter wear Bomber jackets that are ideal for working in cold weather.



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Multipurpose insulated, breathable jackets can be made waterproof, windproof, and can include removable liners and sleeves. To create a more comfortable fit, these jackets are often loaded with a variety of pockets, draw cords and take up features. The materials and design make them ideal for their ability to be utilized year-round, in the rain, snow, and wind. Plus, one multipurpose jacket can replace having to wear a vest, plus a windbreaker, winter jacket, and rain jacket.

These styles are not only more comfortable, but also look better. Added adjustability improves fit, so it is less likely wearers will modify what they are wearing by cutting it or not wearing it so it closes completely. Workers are more likely to comply and less likely to modify apparel, when they like what they are wearing, and they can adjust it to fit.

Better designs can also help to improve longevity and appearance. A number of manufacturers are currently incorporating darker colors into the garments where the most dirt and wear occur. The dark colors help to hide the dirt and improve the appearance of the garment.

Unfortunately, the amount of dark or non compliant colors that can be incorporated is very limited. If you think you see too much of a dark color, ask the manufacturer for third- party testing to ensure that all sizes have the required amount of compliant material. All products are required to be clearly marked or labeled with the specific ANSI standard number, a drawing of the product or product type, and numbers indicating the Class of the product.

### **Better Quality Products Pay Off in Savings**

Like everything else these days, higher performing products do come with a higher cost. However, besides improving the comfort and flexibility of garments, manufacturers are also working to make the garments last longer.

One of the inherent problems with high visibility apparel is keeping it in highly visible condition. Sunlight, laundering, dirt, along with general wear and tear all take a toll on the performance of the product. Most compliant garments state on the label a maximum number of launderings that the materials are tested to and still conform to the original requirements of the standard.

While there are better choices today than years ago, the cost of noncompliance cannot be under estimated. OSHA fines, lost man hours, insurance premiums and tort liability are all reasons to wear ANSI 107 compliant apparel.



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In the end, paying a little extra for a practical, comfortable product may make all the difference between a being in compliance or being fined. And, more importantly, it will make a difference in worker safety.

For more information on the ANSI / ISEA 107 -2010 standard, please visit ISEA's website at [www.safetysafetyequipment.org](http://www.safetysafetyequipment.org).

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