



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1401 EAST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

**Stephen Brich**  
Commissioner

**December 1, 2023**

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) Virginia Chapter  
Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance (VTCA)  
Virginia Asphalt Association (VAA)  
Old Dominion Highway Contractors Association (ODHCA)  
Heavy Construction Contractors Association (HCCA)

**FROM:** Mark A. Cole, P.E., MPA, State Traffic Operations Engineer  
Kerry A. Bates, P.E., State Construction Engineer

**SUBJECT:** VDOT Flagger Certification Process Changes

VDOT's auditing arm (the VDOT Assurance & Compliance Office) recently completed a comprehensive review of VDOT's flagger program. They observed a number of instances of significantly substandard flagger operations in the field, and recommended in part that VDOT improve its controls over the VDOT Flagger Certification program.

Proper flagger behavior (e.g. correct PPE, proper positioning, correct stop/slow paddle and hand gesture usage, being afforded breaks every 2 hours, etc.) is essential to minimizing risk of injuries or fatalities for themselves, their fellow workers, and the traveling public. Ensuring flaggers are properly trained, properly equipped, and properly execute their duties is a joint effort of the Contractor, District Construction, District Work Zone Safety Coordinator, and the flagger.

Currently, flaggers may be certified using either VDOT's in-house flagger certification, the American Traffic Safety Services Association's (ATSSA's) flagger certification program, VDOT Basic Work Zone Certification, or VDOT Intermediate Work Zone Certification (since the Basic and Intermediate Certifications both also include flagger certification).

**To address the recommendations of the audit and improve the overall quality and safety of VDOT flagging, VDOT is updating its policies to require that all flaggers shall be certified using**

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**ATSSA's Flagger Certification program** (<https://atssa.com/Training/Find-a-Course/Flagger-Training-Courses>) starting **December 31, 2024**.

The benefits of this change include:

- Contractors, VDOT staff, and consultant inspectors will be able to easily validate flagger certifications using ATSSA's online database
- Overall improved quality of the flagger training materials and methodology
- Improvement in documenting and training of flagging instructors
- Flagger certification will be good for four years, not two
- Simplified reciprocity with adjacent states

**We request that each of the Industry associations addressed in this memo identify 1-2 representatives to participate in a stakeholder discussion** regarding how best to implement this change in training and certification in such a way that minimizes impacts to both VDOT staff and Industry, while still achieving VDOT's core goals. Please provide your nominations to VDOT's Work Zone Safety Program Manager ([Marc.Lipschultz@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:Marc.Lipschultz@vdot.virginia.gov)) by **January 4, 2024**.

Some key factors to consider:

- Transition to new process: All external flaggers certified on or after 1/1/2025 will need to carry either ATSSA flagger, VDOT Basic Work Zone, or VDOT Intermediate Work Zone cards. VDOT Flagger Cards issued before 1/1/2025 will remain valid until expiration (2 years after issuance).
- Reciprocity: **Effective immediately, VDOT will allow flaggers who have either the ATSSA national or state-specific ATSSA flagger certifications** (e.g. NC, MA, CA, and CO). VDOT will also consider flagger certification programs from other organizations if they are deemed to be of similar rigor and value as ATSSA.
- Online vs. In-person ATSSA certification: Until now, VDOT has only allowed ATSSA flagger certification if the training was conducted in person. District staff will be separately notified that, **effective immediately, VDOT will also accept ATSSA's online flagger certification program**.
- Validating flagger cards: It is the responsibility of Contractors for all Construction, Maintenance, and Land Use Permit activities to verify that all flaggers on the project site during work operations are currently certified in accordance with Section 105.14 of the Road and Bridge Specifications and Chapter 6E - *Flagger Control* in the VWAPM. Flaggers shall always carry their certification cards with them whenever performing flagging activities. Note that ATSSA flagger certification cards are only valid if the flagger is listed in ATSSA's online database (<https://www.atssa.com/Training/Find-a-Trained-Professional>).

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Regardless of how the flagger is certified, it remains the Contractor's responsibility to ensure that all flagging is done in accordance with the VWAPM and the Road and Bridge Specifications. Please be reminded that ATSSA's flagger certification program teaches the requirements of FHWA's MUTCD. However, VDOT has some flagging requirements that go above and beyond the MUTCD requirements.

We look forward to working with you to advance our shared goals of keeping our flaggers, workers, and road users safe. If you have any questions, please contact Marc Lipschultz at [Marc.Lipschultz@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:Marc.Lipschultz@vdot.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

**Cole Mark**  
**nbp74576**

Digitally signed by Cole  
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State Traffic Operations Engineer  
Virginia Department of Transportation

**Kerry A Bates**  
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District Construction Engineers  
District Maintenance Engineers  
District Safety Managers