



**By Don Cross
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CROSSING GUARDS Need Training Every Year

WHY ARE CROSSING GUARDS IMPORTANT?

Adult crossing guards are often the first school staff member a student sees on their walk to school. They help the student's day start the right way with a smile and a "hello". They also allow students to cross the street safely and comfortably. They are often the deciding factor for parents to determine if they will allow their child to walk or ride to school. They have an effective role in alerting drivers that students are in the process of crossing the street and that they need to stop. School administration can count on crossing guards to report unsafe driver behavior, unsafe student crossing behavior, unlawful parking and if they happen to witness suspicious behavior occurring. If emergencies in front of the school occur, they can report them to police and the school's front office.

CROSSING GUARDS AND THE CHANGING ROADWAY

With the amount of pedestrian collisions expanding every year, it makes having crossing guards at important crossing locations a must. Towns, cities and even states are employing different devices along the roadway to help curtail collisions. State and city engineers are reviewing intersections and crossing locations each year along with school districts to determine if changes would help improve safety for students and their families. Federal Safety Agencies, Regional MPO's, engineers and crossing guard training experts are constantly reviewing crossing guard procedures to determine if any changes would help to improve the process for the crossing guards and the safety of the pedestrians they cross.



TRAINING EACH YEAR IS VITAL

This makes the need for crossing guards to receive training every year vital to their success and survival. Changes to crossing procedures in the MUTCD, new information from Police and roadway changes created by the city are examples of what crossing guards need to learn each year. Many crossing guards use the training as a reminder or refresher of their duties. The training also allows trainers to disseminate information they learned from the previous year to the crossing guards for them to process for the upcoming school year. It also allows guards to bring up issues or concerns they had from the previous year to the trainers for clarification.



TRAINERS CONTROL EFFECTIVENESS

Crossing guard trainers need to make a concerted effort to change up the training events each year. This helps to keep crossing guards engaged and willing to attend the training events each year. Little things matter. Crossing guards want to be heard. If there were issues with the air conditioning or sound at the training the year before, these need to be addressed in the following year. If they're not, it will affect how engaged crossing guards will be at the current training event. Crossing guard trainers can't "sleep walk" through the trainings and expect the crossing guards to be engaged. As a member of the Maricopa Association of Governments Crossing Guards Training Committee for the Phoenix region the past 16 years, we spent many months reviewing the past year's training event and comments from crossing guards to enhance the upcoming trainings. Even Covid-19 couldn't stop us from reinventing the crossing guard training event. We had to shift from in-person training to an on-line training model. It changed how we presented the trainings but not the amount of valuable information we provided.

IN CONCLUSION

A well-trained crossing guard who takes his or her job seriously is an asset to their school, district, neighborhood and community. They are worth their weight in gold and have a special place in the hearts of all the children they cross. Schools cannot find them fast enough or keep them long enough. I implore all crossing guards to get their yearly training and be ready for the upcoming school year. This year's training for the Maricopa County region is on Tuesday, August 2nd, 2022 from 9am-12pm at Washington High School located at 2217 W Glendale Avenue. If you need more information, please contact Chris Gottsacker at (602) 254-6300/email: cgottsacker@azmag.gov or visit website: <https://azmag.gov/srts>.

For support on your next Safe Routes to School project, please contact:

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