



TOTAL GROUP

SAFETY & EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Canadian High-Visibility and Reflective Gear Requirements: What Employers Need to Check

Practical equipment guidance for industrial teams.

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General information only. Confirm site-specific equipment decisions, applicable requirements, and manufacturer instructions before purchase or use.

High-visibility workwear is not a one-size-fits-all purchase. In Canada, the right garment depends on the worker's exposure to vehicles or mobile equipment, lighting and weather, background conditions, the job being performed, the jurisdiction, and the controls already in place at the site. The practical starting point is a worksite hazard assessment. Then confirm the applicable provincial or territorial requirement, the garment label and manufacturer information, the garment's fit over required layers, and the care process that will keep the material visible over time. This guide helps employers and purchasing teams structure that review. It is not legal advice and does not replace the applicable occupational health and safety legislation, a site-specific assessment, or a competent safety review.

Key takeaways

- Start with the exposure: vehicle and equipment movement, speed, lighting, weather, sightlines, background and task all affect the selection.
- CSA Z96:22 is the current Canadian high-visibility safety apparel standard, but legal requirements can be more specific by province, industry and task.
- Fluorescent background material supports daytime conspicuity; retroreflective material is especially important in dark or low-light conditions where a light source is present.
- Verify the garment label and manufacturer information before ordering. A product title or online image is not enough to establish suitability for a particular worksite.

- High-visibility apparel complements traffic control, separation, barriers, lighting, procedures and supervision. It does not replace them.

1 Start with the hazard assessment, not the colour

“Reflective gear” is often used as a broad term, but it does not describe all of the factors that make a worker visible. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) recommends a worksite assessment that considers mobile-equipment interaction, traffic speed and volume, light levels, weather, sightlines, background complexity, work duration, worker distractions and the existing engineering or administrative controls.

That review changes the selection conversation. A worker directing vehicles, walking near haul trucks, completing roadside utility work, crossing a loading area or working around forklifts may each face a different visibility problem. The garment is important, but the work zone, traffic management plan, barriers, lighting and communication arrangements matter as well.

Begin with these questions:

- Where will the worker be located in relation to traffic, mobile equipment or operating machinery?
- How fast are vehicles or equipment moving, and is physical separation available?
- What are the light, weather, background and sightline conditions during the shift?
- Is the worker performing a task that limits attention, movement or ability to move clear of equipment?
- What control measures already exist, such as work-zone layout, barriers, warning devices, spotters, exclusion zones, procedures or lighting?
- Does the work include night, dawn, dusk, underground, poor-weather or low-visibility conditions?

2 Understand the role of CSA Z96:22

CSA Group lists **CSA Z96:22, High-visibility safety apparel**, as the current 2022 edition of the Canadian standard. The standard addresses high-visibility apparel design. It is an important reference point for garment design, selection, use and care, but it is not itself a blanket legal rule for every Canadian worksite.

CCOHS explains that high-visibility apparel is selected according to the work environment and that employers should get proof that the garment materials and design meet the applicable CSA requirements. That information is generally found on the garment tag and in the manufacturer’s product information.

The standard’s classes relate to the coverage and visibility provided by the garment. In simple terms, higher coverage supports greater visibility, but the right choice still depends on the actual task and applicable rules. Do not select a class solely because it appears more protective; make sure it is appropriate for the required work, the work zone and other required PPE or workwear layers.

3 Fluorescent material, reflective material and low-light work

Fluorescent background material and retroreflective striping do different jobs.

- **Fluorescent material** helps the worker stand out in daylight and low natural light, such as overcast weather, dawn, dusk or fog.
- **Retroreflective material** returns light toward its source, making it especially valuable when a vehicle headlight or another directional light source reaches the garment.
- **Combined-performance material** can provide both functions in one material.

Ontario’s mining guidance explains that low-light work often requires greater visibility and that Class 3 garments provide the greatest body coverage. It also notes that the workplace regulation governs

where it is more restrictive than the CSA standard. This is a useful model for all buyers: use the standard as a design reference, but confirm the governing requirement for the specific workplace.

4 Provincial rules can be more specific than the standard

There is no single sentence that covers every Canadian jobsite. Provincial legislation and industry-specific regulations may set particular requirements for a situation.

4.1 Alberta: pedestrian exposure to traffic

Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Code requires high-visibility safety apparel where a worker on foot is exposed to traffic. It also requires designated traffic controllers to wear apparel that identifies the role and to use retroreflective apparel where it is dark or visibility is poor. The Code requires traffic-control measures beyond PPE where traffic is dangerous.

4.2 British Columbia: speed and exposure matter

WorkSafeBC's OHS Regulation includes class requirements for workers exposed to vehicles or mobile equipment based on travel speed, with additional provisions and exceptions in the regulation. That is a practical reminder that the speed and nature of mobile-equipment exposure must be part of the assessment.

4.3 Ontario: rules differ by sector and task

Ontario construction regulation contains specific apparel requirements for workers who may be endangered by vehicular traffic and for signallers. Ontario's mining guidance explains separate requirements for surface and underground mining, with risk assessment and work conditions informing the selection. These examples reinforce a core buying rule: check the regulation for the worker's province, sector and role before ordering.

5 Fit, layering and the outermost garment

A compliant garment that is covered, poorly fitted or worn beyond its useful life may not provide the intended visibility. Consider the full workwear system, including thermal layers, rainwear, arc-rated or flame-resistant requirements, harnesses, backpacks, tools and task-specific PPE.

For effective use:

- Size the garment for the worker and the layers likely to be worn during the shift.
- Do not allow another outer layer to cover the high-visibility material unless the outer layer provides the required visibility for the job.
- Confirm that harnesses, fall-protection equipment, radios or tool belts do not obscure critical visibility features.
- Check that the garment allows safe movement without creating an entanglement or snag hazard around equipment.
- Review any requirement for flame-resistant, arc-rated, waterproof or insulated outerwear separately. High visibility does not automatically establish those other properties.

6 Care, inspection and replacement

High-visibility apparel needs a maintenance process. Dirt, wear, damaged tape, contamination and incorrect laundering can reduce performance. Ontario's mining guidance recommends keeping retroreflective materials clean, avoiding bleach and fabric softener where they can degrade materials, and removing garments that are heavily worn, torn, soiled or otherwise no longer suitable.

A simple issue-and-care program should include:

- a pre-use inspection for damaged, peeling, cracked, contaminated or obscured striping;
- garment-specific manufacturer care instructions;
- a replacement process for worn or contaminated clothing;
- a clear rule for reporting damaged garments; and
- a review of whether the garment still suits the current work and season.

7 Product examples: review the garment, then confirm suitability

Total Group carries high-visibility workwear that can support a purchasing review. These are examples only. Confirm the current product label, manufacturer information, size, site requirements and jurisdictional requirements before use.

- **Pioneer 5514S Hi-Vis Poly/Cotton Safety Coveralls – Bright Orange – Short:** the current product listing says the manufacturer lists this configuration as **CSA Z96-22 Class 3 Level 2**. Confirm the garment label and the selected size/configuration before ordering.
- **Pioneer 5999A Traffic Safety Coverall – Hi-Viz Yellow/Green:** a traffic-workwear example with reflective tape and mesh ventilation features described on the product page.
- **Pioneer 6000 Traffic Safety Overalls – Hi-Viz Yellow/Green:** an overall-style traffic-workwear example with reflective tape and mesh-panel features described on the product page.

For a broader starting point, [browse PPE and workwear](#) and discuss your work requirements with our team.

8 A buyer's pre-purchase checklist

Before approving a high-visibility workwear order, record:

1. The worker role and task.
2. The traffic or mobile-equipment exposure, including speed and separation.
3. Lighting, weather, background and sightline conditions.
4. The applicable provincial, industry and client requirements.
5. The garment label, manufacturer documentation, sizing and care instructions.
6. Required layers and compatibility with harnesses, radios, tools or other PPE.
7. The process for inspection, laundering, replacement and field feedback.

9 Questions teams often ask

9.1 Does reflective tape alone meet the requirement?

Not necessarily. The selection must consider the applicable law, worksite assessment, garment design and the conditions in which the worker will be seen. Fluorescent background material and retro-reflective material serve different purposes.

9.2 Does CSA Z96:22 automatically make a garment right for every job?

No. CSA Z96:22 is a current design standard, but a specific province, industry, client or work activity may impose additional or more restrictive requirements. The job assessment and applicable legal requirements still control.

9.3 Should a buyer choose the highest class for every worker?

Select the garment based on the actual work, exposure, rules and workwear system. More coverage may be appropriate for some low-light or high-exposure tasks, but suitability should be established through the hazard assessment and jurisdictional requirements.

9.4 What should be done when a garment becomes dirty or damaged?

Follow the manufacturer's care instructions, inspect it before use, and remove it from service if contamination, wear or damage means it may no longer provide the required visibility or protection.

10 Talk with our team

High-visibility workwear works best when it is part of a clear traffic-management and PPE selection process. If you are reviewing a workwear standard, seasonal issue list, roadside or mobile-equipment exposure, contact our team to discuss your requirements.

11 Sources

- CSA Group — CSA Z96:22, High-visibility safety apparel
- CCOHS — High-Visibility Safety Apparel
- WorkSafeBC OHS Regulation — Part 8, Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment
- Ontario — High-visibility safety apparel for mines and mining plants
- Alberta OHS Code — Part 12, General Safety Precautions
- Ontario Regulation 213/91 — Construction Projects