

Traffic Controller interview questions

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What to expect

Traffic controller interviews focus on safety, practical traffic management and how you handle the public. Employers want to know you can follow a plan, stay calm under pressure and communicate clearly.

- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about White Card, accreditation, WHS obligations and how you apply traffic control plans.
- **Technical and process:** Questions that test your knowledge of setting up signs, cones, portable traffic lights, arrow boards and using a stop/slow bat correctly.
- **Scenario-based:** Situations involving emergency vehicles, angry drivers, equipment failures or changing traffic conditions.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of teamwork, handling conflict and reporting hazards or near misses.
- **Customer service and communication:** How you interact with road users, pedestrians and crew members, including radio etiquette.

The interview is often a short phone screen followed by a face-to-face or site-based meeting with a supervisor or traffic management coordinator. You may be asked to walk through a traffic control plan or demonstrate bat signals. Expect a mix of safety questions, practical scenarios and behavioural examples.

1. Walk me through how you set up a temporary traffic management site from arrival to pack-up.

Why they ask

This tests your process knowledge and whether you follow a plan safely.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: arrival and checks, reading the traffic control plan, setting up signs and cones in the right order, positioning portable traffic lights if needed, then monitoring and packing up.

Example answer

"First I arrive and check the traffic control plan, confirm the site conditions and make sure I have the right signs, cones and bat. I park safely and put on my high-vis and make sure my White Card is on me. Then I set up advance warning signs, then cones and barriers, working from the outside in. If portable traffic lights are needed, I position them and test them. I check radio contact with the crew. During the shift I monitor traffic flow and adjust lanes if needed. At pack-up I remove equipment in reverse order, starting from the furthest point and checking the road is clear before I leave."

2. Tell me about a time you had to deal with an aggressive or impatient road user.

Why they ask

This assesses your composure, customer service and safety judgement.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Focus on staying calm, not escalating, and following procedure.

Example answer

"At a roadwork site, a driver ignored my stop bat and drove through the closure. I stayed calm, did not approach the vehicle, and used my radio to alert the supervisor. I noted the vehicle details and reported it. Afterwards, I made sure the signs were clear and visible. The supervisor praised my calm"

response, and no one was hurt.”

3. You are controlling traffic on a single lane and an emergency vehicle approaches with lights and sirens. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your ability to prioritise safety and emergency access under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess the situation, prioritise emergency access, act quickly and communicate clearly.

Example answer

“I immediately stop traffic in the direction the emergency vehicle is coming from and wave it through. If I have a radio, I let the crew know an emergency vehicle is passing. I make sure pedestrians are clear. Once the vehicle passes, I resume normal traffic control. I always prioritise emergency vehicles because seconds matter.”

4. What do you check on a portable traffic light before it goes into operation?

Why they ask

This checks your technical knowledge and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Use a checklist approach: power, lights, timers, visibility, stability.

Example answer

“I check the battery level and that it is fully charged. I test the red and green lights to make sure they work. I check the timer settings are correct for the site. I make sure the unit is stable and not blocking any access. I also check the solar panel is clean if it has one. Finally, I confirm the radio or remote control works if it has one.”

5. How do you ensure you and your crew stay safe when working near live traffic?

Why they ask

This is a core safety question for any traffic controller.

How to structure your answer

Describe your safety routine: risk assessment, controls, communication, and monitoring.

Example answer

“I always start with a risk assessment and check the traffic control plan. I make sure everyone has high-vis, and I position myself where I can see and be seen. I use the stop/slow bat clearly and keep radio contact. I watch for changed conditions, like a vehicle drifting, and I report hazards straight away. If something feels unsafe, I stop work and speak up.”

6. How do you handle a driver who refuses to follow your directions?

Why they ask

This tests your customer service, de-escalation and safety judgement.

How to structure your answer

Use a de-escalation structure: stay calm, do not argue, repeat the direction once, then withdraw and report if unsafe.

Example answer

“I stay calm and polite. I repeat the direction once, clearly. If the driver still refuses, I do not physically confront them. I step back to a safe position, use my radio to alert the supervisor, and note the vehicle

details. I never put myself or others in danger. The supervisor can decide whether to involve police or adjust the traffic plan."