

<p>Long time ago in the 1950s in America, the very first article appeared about safety reflectors (reflective clothing in the USA). Before that reflective sheeting by 3M Co., had been used for highway markings and soon rectangular shaped tin plates covered with reflective materials were introduced and manufactured in many countries. But it was in the European countries as in United Kingdom and especially in the Scandinavian countries the matter of pedestrians visibility in the dark was taken most seriously by the authorities in the late 50s and early 60s, to campaign about the usage of pedestrian reflectors.</p>

<p>From the start also private enterprises as big companies came along the work to prevent pedestrian accidents and found safety reflectors as a good medium to advertise as donators of these life saving products.</p>

<p>In early 1960s pedestrian reflectors were given to school children in many European countries, in Finland the Philips Ltd donated safety reflectors to all first class school children and nation wide campaigns took place with adverts in all medias for the use of reflectors in the dark.</p>

<p>At the University of Uppsala in Sweden the measurements was set for reflector effectiveness with regard to distance in the context of visibility to motorists.</p>

<p>The first generation pedestrian reflector was replaced by a plastic prism reflector in mid 60s, as the Finnish Traffic Police with Talja (the Traffic Section of Accident Defence Association) turned to Mr Arvi Lehti (founder of TALMU) in order to obtain a more effective and more functional safety reflector for the pedestrians. 1965 the very first high visibility and all weather prism reflector for pedestrians was created.</p>

<p>Even more businesses found safety reflectors as a way to do something good in their communities, with informing and promoting printed messages to their clients. Once again in Finland 1967 half a million reflectors were donated to all primary school children by Orion Medicine Company and the Finnish Traffic Police visited children at schools informing about traffic safety with the reflectors.</p>

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By the end of 1960s after all hard work of campaigning for the usage of pedestrian reflectors, statistics in Sweden and in Finland showed that night time accidents with pedestrians had been reduced. Studies in Finland could tell that up to 40% of pedestrians were using reflectors.</p>

<p>1971 The Swedish Traffic Safety Organisation NTF, came out with the first suggestion that it should be added to the traffic code, that a pedestrian should be using a reflector in the dark on unlit roads by law, but it still took a long time until this came true.</p>

<p>1972 Finland set minimum requirements for the quality of reflectors to prevent low quality products being sold as safety reflectors. Official standards (SFS) for pedestrian reflectors were established in Finland 1979.</p>

<p>In the 1980s the use of pedestrian reflectors had increased steadily, most in Scandinavia and people had knowledge about reflectors, attitudes were positive and the main reasons for not using reflectors were thoughtlessness or forgetting.</p>

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1982 a law went into effect in the Finnish Road Traffic Code (42) that reads pedestrians travelling unlit roads after dark other than sidewalks or bicycle paths must generally wear an appropriate reflector but no penalty for non-compliance is set. Today

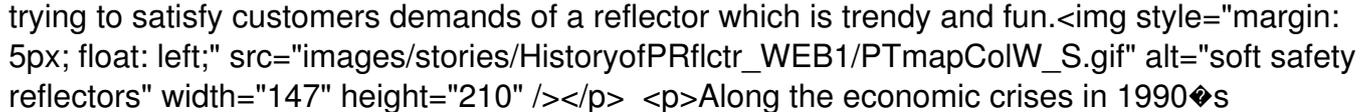
since 2003, 42 read pedestrians travelling roads after dark must generally wear an appropriate reflector. Now it includes lit as well as unlit areas, because street lighting is usually weak.</p>

<p>Nordic Traffic Safety Year 1983 with large campaigns by the national

traffic safety organisations, traffic police, manufacturers and sponsoring companies boosted up spreading reflector information through TV-spots every autumn and by the end of 80s resulted in usage rated as high as 60% among pedestrians. The Nordic Countries together established universal standards for pedestrian safety reflectors.

In the 90s the European Union countries began to adopt the SFS and Nordic standards for PPE (personal protective equipment) such as helmets and other devices. The PPE Directive included standards for high-visibility warning clothing and for pedestrian reflectors (EN 13356 Visibility Accessories for Non-professional Use).

Third generation pedestrian reflectors – the soft prismatic film reflectors were invented with endless possibilities for designs in shapes and colours, the number of reflector manufacturers increased with lower production costs to create a variety of attractive reflectors, unfortunately many failed to comply the given standards of reflectivity by trying to satisfy customers demands of a reflector which is trendy and fun.



Along the economic crises in 1990s manufacturers were also forced to find solutions which were not always good for the safety, the low quality reflectors of both types hard and soft appears all the time on the market, confusing the consumers, causing extra work for the authorities and putting the low quality reflector users in real danger.

When the recommendations about usage of safety reflectors started in early 1960s, pedestrian victims in traffic accidents in Finland alone had been about 300 year by year and much later in the year 2002 there were 40 pedestrians killed on Finnish roads, where these days every third pedestrian uses a safety reflector in towns and two thirds outside of towns. Finland might still be the only nation where by law pedestrians must generally wear an appropriate reflector in the dark.

2010 Seguran.ora.com was founded to introduce pedestrian safety reflectors in Portugal and to promote awareness to traffic safety.

As a pedestrian in Portugal you don't have to use a reflector in traffic during the dark, but it is highly recommended and always wise to use a pedestrian safety reflector.

Photos and text by Seguran.ora.com