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## My Crossing Guard

Remember to Stop, Look and Listen

by Ken Embley, CPPA

The doom and gloom of economic news is a real downer. People are worried about the future, their family, job and by all indications, they should be. A Deseret News article written by Bob Bernick Jr. and Lisa Riley leads with...

*Get ready for some bad economic times for Utah state government, with layoffs of state workers and a reduction of programs for Human Services recipients and other "critical" areas potentially considered...*

Oh, and by the way, I do wish you and yours a happy holiday season.

When I was in grade school, a crossing guard sternly shouted at me "before crossing the street; stop, look and listen!" At the time, it seemed like good advice, particularly because he had just pulled me out of the way of an intrusive car fender. I do remember the sounds of screeching tires and the look of a frightened but very angry driver. Funny—the memory is vivid and clear.

To transition to today's economic challenges, my crossing guard's advice seems appropriate. Stop—is to ponder and raise your own awareness; look—is to see what is on the horizon; and listen—as in listen to your staff.

Recently, my boss returned from one of those doomsday types meeting with the big wigs here on campus. The news is to prepare for as much as a double-digit cut in "hard money" from the budget. Knowing that the realization of gloomy projections could weigh heavy, he took the time to write out the current facts, he emailed the information, and then he set out to visit with the troops. My crossing guard might say, a good example of stop, look and listen supervision.

Now you might say my strategy here is to kiss up to the boss (guilty as charged), but in tough times, good supervisors should take time to stop, look and listen. My feeling is that people want some sense of security and supervisors attuned to the concerns of staff lend a sense of security.

I know, some might rebut with, if you do not have all the facts, some facts can be dangerous and I know that in tough times, conditions may evolve into tragic realities. However, I argue the potential of bad news should not stop the news. My word of advice for supervisors in tough times remains—stop to ponder, look out on the horizon and listen to staff—a strategy of responsible supervision.

The best of holiday wishes from me to you during this time of challenge and opportunity.

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