

## Inspection of couplings for dog trailers, pig trailers and road train dollies

### Background

This safety alert has been issued by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) following a safety issue identified to the NHVR by investigators examining a fatal fuel tanker crash in country Victoria on 7 August 2014.

While the investigation continues, the NHVR wishes to communicate early observations. This information is provided without comment as to any contributory cause to the collision.

The frontline investigation is being performed by Victoria Police, who are maintaining close liaison with the NHVR and the Victorian Transport Industry Enforcement Liaison Committee.

### The facts

- › The heavy vehicle involved in the collision was a rigid tanker truck towing a four axle dog tanker trailer.
- › The coupling between the towing truck and trailer failed resulting in separation of the trailer from the truck.
- › The trailer was connected to the towing truck by a drawbar eye, which connected to an automatic pin coupling on the truck.
- › This is a common coupling arrangement in many heavy trailers and road train dollies.
- › Investigators have established that, in this case, the thread on the nut and the rear of the drawbar eye has failed.
- › The drawbar eye has pulled out from the drawbar eye housing (block) on the drawbar of the trailer.

### What you should do

The drawbar eye and automatic pin coupling are safety-critical components of these types of heavy vehicle combinations.

If you operate a dog trailer, pig trailer or road train dolly fitted with these types of coupling, you are advised to inspect the coupling systems to ensure their integrity, with a particular focus on the drawbar eye fitment.

- › Consider whether your maintenance system will detect any looseness in the fitting of a drawbar eye.
- › This component is not easily tested by hand and any looseness may not be visible when a trailer is stationary after braking.

You may also wish to take the opportunity to:

- › review how your inspection system detects other possible issues, such as cracks in the drawbar eye housing (block) or any kinks or cracks in the drawbar.
- › consider whether you would voluntarily fit supplementary chains (safety chains) to heavy trailer drawbars.

Any supplementary chains should be compliant to Australian Standard (AS2321) and fitted in accordance with the Australian Design Rules and relevant Vehicle Standards Bulletins. Installation should be carried out by qualified persons and equipment properly maintained and secured when in service.

### Further guidance

- › Operators should follow manufacturer guidelines in conducting these inspections and maintenance checks.
- › Those installing these types of coupling should reference the requirements for fitment in the [Heavy Vehicle \(Vehicle Standards\) National Regulation](#) and [Vehicle Standards Bulletin 6](#).
- › Those inspecting these types of coupling should reference the [National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual](#) for guidance.
- › The [National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual](#) also has information relating to safety chains for heavy vehicles.

### Acknowledgement

The NHVR acknowledges the support of Victoria Police and the Victorian Transport Industry Enforcement Liaison Committee in preparing this safety alert. The Committee comprises Victoria Police, VicRoads, Work Safe Victoria, Victoria Transport Association and Transport Workers Union (Victorian Branch).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided without comment as to any contributory cause to the collision.

### For more information

**visit** [www.nhvr.gov.au](http://www.nhvr.gov.au)  
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