

Safety is everyone's responsibility

Everyone in the heavy vehicle industry has a responsibility to prevent or minimise potential injury, danger or loss by ensuring their transport activities are safe.

Having a Safety Management System (SMS) in place in your business can be one of the most effective ways of meeting your safety obligations under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL). Adopting and actively using an SMS has proven to help reduce safety-related incidents in other heavy transport industries, such as maritime, rail and aviation.

What is an SMS?

An SMS is a systematic approach to managing safety, including the necessary organisational structures, accountabilities, policies and procedures, which is integrated throughout the business wherever possible.

When implemented into your business, an SMS will help you to continuously improve the safety of your operations.

What are the benefits of an SMS?

An SMS can help you:

- provide a safer work environment for your employees, customers, contractors and the public
- manage your safety duties obligation under the HVNL
- demonstrate your ability to manage risk and ensure safety
- become an employer of choice and preferred supplier to customers
- make informed decisions and increase efficiency
- allocate resources to the most critical areas that have an impact on safety
- reduce costs associated with incidents and accidents.

What's in an effective SMS?

When you put an SMS into practice, it should become a part of the way you do business every day and not just treated like a 'bolt-on' process. It should reflect the way work is done and influence every task you do. An SMS also needs to be appropriate for the size and complexity of your business.

A typical SMS framework is made up of four key components: Safety policy and documentation, Safety risk management, Safety assurance and Safety promotion and training.





Safety policy and documentation

This outlines what your business will do to manage safety. It focuses on the safety objectives, commitment and accountabilities of your management and business owners and explains how they will build on experience to continually improve their SMS.

Your safety documentation should also clearly detail the methods, processes and organisational structure needed to meet your safety goals. It should identify the key personnel responsible for implementing and maintaining your safety-related processes and procedures.

Finally, it should also document how interactions with third parties will be managed within the boundaries of your SMS.

Safety risk management

Conducting robust risk management activities is a reliable way to help eliminate or minimise your safety hazards and risks. The core component of an SMS is how your business manages its safety risks. This should include:

1. identifying and reporting safety-related hazards and incidents
2. assessing what harm or risk could arise from each hazard
3. identifying current controls
4. putting in place any additional controls required to help eliminate or minimise the level of risk
5. monitoring or reviewing the effectiveness of your risk controls.

Safety assurance

This component focuses on the ongoing reliability and performance of your SMS. Safety assurance is most often done through some form of regular monitoring and analysis of the system by conducting investigations after incidents or errors occur, as well as undertaking audits or reviews of safety-related processes and procedures. The safety assurance process ensures that your SMS—and therefore the safety performance of your business—will continually improve.

Safety promotion and training

This component helps ensure everyone in your business is aware of your SMS and understands it.

Safety promotion aims to encourage a positive safety culture within your business by involving your employees in developing your SMS and making safety improvements. It may include, for example, communication activities such as toolbox talks or meetings, fact sheets about an important safety requirement, safety alerts and posters. For safety promotion to be effective, it's important that management and supervisors lead by example and promote a consistent safety message.

Safety-related training ensures your employees know what's required of them and how to do it. Training programs should fit the needs and complexity of your business. Providing appropriate safety training to your employees—regardless of their role in the business—gives them a better understanding of your SMS and helps make them part of your business's safety goals and objectives.

The NHVR website provides guidance material, tools and templates to help you develop and implement an SMS in your business. Visit www.nhvr.gov.au/sms

For more information email info@nhvr.gov.au or phone 1300 MYNHVR* (1300 696 487).

*Standard 1300 call charges apply. Please check with your phone provider.

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