Vehicle Standards Guide 2 (VSG-2)
Changes to the Heavy Vehicle Safety Standards
Revised June 2018

This guide provides advice to the heavy vehicle industry about changes that will be made to the heavy vehicle safety standards from 1 July 2018.

Introduction

To ensure that the Heavy Vehicle National Law (the Law), and the Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation (the Regulation) are kept current, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) regularly undertakes reviews and makes changes when needed.

Following a recent review, changes will be made to vehicle safety standards requirements in the Law and the Regulation. These changes will commence from 1 July 2018. The changes being made are relatively minor, with the majority being made to align new and in-service vehicle safety standards. The following is a summary of the changes.

Summary of changes

Changes will be made to the technical requirements of the vehicle safety standards, set out in the Regulation, including:

- Warning sign requirements for long vehicles and road trains
- Rear marking plate requirements
- Condensate drain valve requirements
- Number plate markings for hydrogen and electric powered vehicles

Warning signs for long vehicles and road trains

The HVNL previously required long vehicle and road train signs that are used on vehicles to be made from a rigid material, such as sheet steel.

To provide more flexibility to industry, the NHVR decided to remove the restriction on the type of material that could be used for these signs, instead adopting a more performance based approach.

To provide operators with the benefits of this change as soon as possible, the NHVR published the National Heavy Vehicle Standards (Warning Sign) Exemption Notice 2017 which allowed operators to use warning signs made from flexible material.

These changes have now been reflected in the Law, and the interim notice has been retracted.

More information on the changes to long vehicle and road train warning signs is detailed in Vehicle Standards Guide 19 (VSG-19) available on the NHVRs website.

Rear marking plates

Vehicles with a GVM over 12t and trailers with an ATM over 10t are required to be fitted with retro reflective markings at the rear (rear marking plates) to increase their visibility. Traditionally rear marking plates that comply with Vehicle Standards Bulletin 12 (VSB12) were the only recognised way of achieving this.

The NHVR recognises the increasing preference of operators to fit vehicles with UN standard conspicuity markings, in addition to the rear marking plates required in the Regulation.

To reduce the regulatory burden on operators who chose to meet the increased visibility requirement by fitting UN standard conspicuity markings, the NHVR decided to exempt the requirement to also fit rear marking plates.

To provide operators with the benefits of this change as soon as possible, the NHVR published the National Heavy Vehicle Standards (Conspicuity Marking) Exemption Notice 2016 (No.1).

This change has now been reflected in the Law, and the interim notice has been retracted.

More information about VSB12 is available on the Regulators website at: www.nhvr.gov.au/vsb12

Automatic condensate drain valves

As part of routine review of the HVNL, the NHVR identified that the requirements for condensate drain valves in the law were not clear and could allow for the fitting of drain valves that were not consistent with ADR requirements.

Generally, manual drain valves have been the accepted practice in the heavy vehicle industry for some time, however over time there has been an increasing use of automatic valves. While automatic valves have their benefits, it is important that they do not remove the ability for an operator or inspector to manually operate the valve.
The HVNL has now been amended to require that where an automatic drain valve is fitted, a manual valve is also required. The manual valve can either be fitted as a separate valve or a manual function can be incorporated into the automatic valve.

**Number plate markings for hydrogen and electric powered vehicles**

Following a request from emergency service agencies, new requirement have been introduced that will expand the requirement to label vehicles that are powered by alternate fuels.

When attending an accident or incident, emergency responders such as fire fighters need to be able to readily identify whether a vehicle is powered by an alternate fuel source so that necessary precautions can be taken to keep the responders and the general public safe.

Historically, liquid petroleum gas (LPG) or natural gas (NG) were the most common alternate fuels used, and vehicles powered by these fuels have been required to display a small marker on their front and rear number plates. Recently, new alternate fuel sources have begun to be used in vehicles and it is necessary to update the marking requirements to include these new fuel types.

From 1 January 2019, vehicles there are designed to run on either hydrogen or electric power sources, must have markings fixed to the number plate.

More information about number plate marking requirements for alternatively fuelled vehicles can be found in Section 12 of the NHVM version 2.3.

**National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual**

The National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual (NHVIM) has been updated to reflect these changes as well as to make a number of maintenance amendments based on feedback provided by industry. The revised version (version 2.3) of the NHVIM will take affect from 1 July 2018. For more information about the changes to the manual visit www.nhvr.gov.au/nhvim.

**Complying with the national heavy vehicle safety standards**

The operator of a heavy vehicle must ensure their vehicle complies with the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) and Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation. Using or permitting another person to use a defective heavy vehicle on a road is an offence.

A defective heavy vehicle is a vehicle that:

- does not comply with the heavy vehicle safety standards; or
- has a part that does not perform its intended function; or
- has deteriorated to an extent that it cannot be reasonably relied on to perform its intended function.

Penalties can include on-the-spot fines or prosecution. Formal warnings or a defect notice may also be issued. For more information see the Heavy vehicle defects—Compliance and enforcement bulletin at www.nhvr.gov.au/ce-bulletins

**For more information:**

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