

Developing procedures – Quick Guide

What is a procedure?

A procedure is an important component of an SMS and an effective risk control tool. A procedure is a document that:

- provides step-by-step instructions on how employees in your business should perform specific heavy vehicle transport activities correctly, consistently and safely
- details the manner and order in which employees should perform steps in a transport activity from start to finish, in accordance with your Safety Policy and relevant legislation
- improves the performance and outcomes of a transport activity by clearly detailing why the steps in the activity are performed (the purpose) and what is involved or required (the scope)
- outlines who performs each step in the activity and when and how often they perform the activity.

A procedure describes the steps, hazards, tools, personal protective equipment (PPE) and controls in sufficient detail so employees can:

- understand the hazards and risks
- verify controls are in place to ensure safety
- confirm that the vehicle, equipment or system works as expected.

Why should you develop procedures?

Regardless of the size of your business, developing procedures as part of a Safety Management System (SMS) can be one of the best ways of ensuring you have a safety-focused business and are complying with your safety duty obligations under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL).

The procedures you develop and implement as part of your SMS will:

- help minimise the risk of incidents occurring by documenting how your transport activities should be performed safely
- provide your business with assurance that all employees will perform your transport activities in a safe, efficient, deliberate and controlled manner to enable consistent and safe outcomes

- assist your business to demonstrate the effort it makes to ensure the safety of transport activities
- clearly define roles and responsibilities for each transport activity, so all employees understand what's required of them and who holds key safety responsibilities.

How do you develop a procedure?

While you and your employees may have a general understanding of how to complete a task, there is often no procedure explaining the steps. A good starting point when developing a procedure is to consider the following points:

- write down what you currently do in the order you do it
- check with your employees who are familiar with the task to confirm that you have included all the steps and considered any risks
- observe an employee doing the task and check that all the steps are included and that the employee is following the steps.

Now that you have drafted and checked your procedure, it is worthwhile and good practice to formalise it. The NHVR has provided a template and worked example to assist you to formalise your procedure. As a general guide, when developing a procedure you should include the following elements:

Procedure name

The name of the procedure should include an action-based title with relevant keywords that clearly and quickly identifies the specific transport activity.

Procedure purpose

The procedure purpose should provide employees with a:

- clear definition of what the procedure is intended to cover and/or achieve (i.e. the primary objective)
- quick understanding of whether the procedure is applicable for the transport activity they need to perform.

The purpose should also describe, as simply and clearly as possible, the risks the procedure will control.

Complete a risk assessment

As part of the process to develop a procedure, you should also complete a risk assessment of the task to:

- consider the complexity and potential risks associated with each step
- ensure you treat and control these risks in your procedure.

You should add your risk assessment to your Risk Register and consider any additional controls that could be implemented.

When documenting your procedure, you should write each step from the perspective of the person doing the activity, ensuring they understand and manage the associated risks.

Procedure use

The procedure use should explain:

- when the procedure is to be used and the extent and boundaries of the task
- when the procedure is **not** to be used and the limitations and boundaries of the task.

Competency and training

You should consider the level of competency and training required to complete the task. It should be very clear that a person must be trained, qualified, have completed a specific course or hold a certificate of competency before they start the task.

What you require for the task

It is important that you also consider if anything else is needed in preparation to do the task. You should list any specific requirements, such as:

- PPE
- tools, equipment, parts and supplies
- related and required documents.

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Before you start the task

It may also be necessary to identify the pre-start requirements that need to be met before the task is commenced. Be very clear if you need to highlight any pre-start conditions that **must** be met.

Task steps

Developing a new procedure can be as simple as documenting the steps involved in a specific transport activity. You should only include the steps necessary for accomplishing the task.

You should clearly define the role responsible for completing the procedure or the roles for specific steps within the procedure.

Example: Loading and unloading tubular cargo on trucks

Step	Role	Action
1	Driver	EXAMINE the loading area for hazards that could interfere with loading and unloading.
2	Driver	USE exclusion zone ground markers to SET UP a safety exclusion zone within the loading and unloading area.
3	Scheduler	DETERMINE the specific tubular cargo loading order based on delivery schedule.
4	Loader	USE crane with slings and tag line to load the tubular cargo.
5	Loader	MAKE SURE the tubular cargo has settled BEFORE removing the tag line and slings.

A more complex procedure may also be a list of steps with subsections providing more details to explain a specific action or activity.

Procedure writing

When writing your procedure:

- Keep steps as brief and concise as possible.
- Use simple, common, industry terms your employees are familiar with.
- Involve employees who regularly perform the activity.
- Use simple, action-oriented words (verbs) such as 'lift', 'replace' and 'examine' to get the point across clearly.
- Use images, drawings or tables to illustrate the steps.
- Emphasise important actions and information by using UPPER CASE, **bold**, underlined or *italicised* text.
- Use a standard document template (using consistent format, presentation and symbols). Include any equipment, supplies, documents and standards required to perform the procedure.
- Present safety warnings before or alongside the steps in the procedure where there is a risk or issue.

Flowchart

If your transport activity is complex, it may make it easier for employees if you also present the steps in a flowchart. A flowchart will provide employees with a visual overview of the overall procedure and correct order and flow of the steps in the activity.

Reference documents

Include references to relevant or important documents (e.g. other procedures, guidelines, policies or legislation) that are needed to understand and effectively perform the activity and comply with any specific requirements.

Definitions

It's important that any terms, acronyms or abbreviations mentioned in the procedure are listed with appropriate definitions. For example:

Safety Exclusion Zone	An area where the driver can stand and not be in danger of being hit by a forklift during loading or unloading
SMS	Safety Management System

Review and manage your procedures

Test and validate your procedures

To ensure your procedures are safe, accurate, complete and easy to use, you should arrange for employees to test them. They should follow and validate the steps required to complete the transport activity and then provide feedback. Testers should include:

- people with a limited knowledge of the activity and
- people who regularly perform the activity.

Continuous improvement

After the steps of a transport activity have been explained in a procedure and the risks have been identified and controlled, it's important to make sure your controls are working as expected. The best way to do this is to continuously monitor and review the procedures you've implemented. Don't wait until something goes wrong.

Record on your revision history any changes made to a procedure (e.g. through ongoing risk assessments, improvements or equipment updates).

On the NHVR website there is a procedure template and worked example. We encourage you to use the template and modify it to suit your business requirements.