SMS | SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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NHVR

Safety is everyone's responsibility

Everyone in the heavy vehicle industry has a responsibility manage the public risks associated with their transport activities.

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. Similar safety benefits can also be realised across the heavy vehicle industry.

What is an SMS?

An SMS is a systematic approach to managing safety, including 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.

Under section 457A of the HVNL, an SMS for an operator of a heavy vehicle, is a group of policies, systems, and procedures that relates to the size, nature, complexity and risk profile of the operator's transport activities:

- Identify public risks associated with the operator's transport activities and the driving of heavy vehicles.
- Assess the identified public risks.
- Specify the controls to manage and mitigate the identified public risks.

Operators wishing to participate in the Heavy Vehicle Accreditation - (HVA) General Safety Accreditation or Alternate Compliance Accreditation are required to have an effective SMS that complies with the Safety Management System Standard.

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. Under the HVNL an SMS framework is made up of five key requirements: Leadership and commitment, Risk Management, People, Assurance, monitoring and improvement, Safety systems.

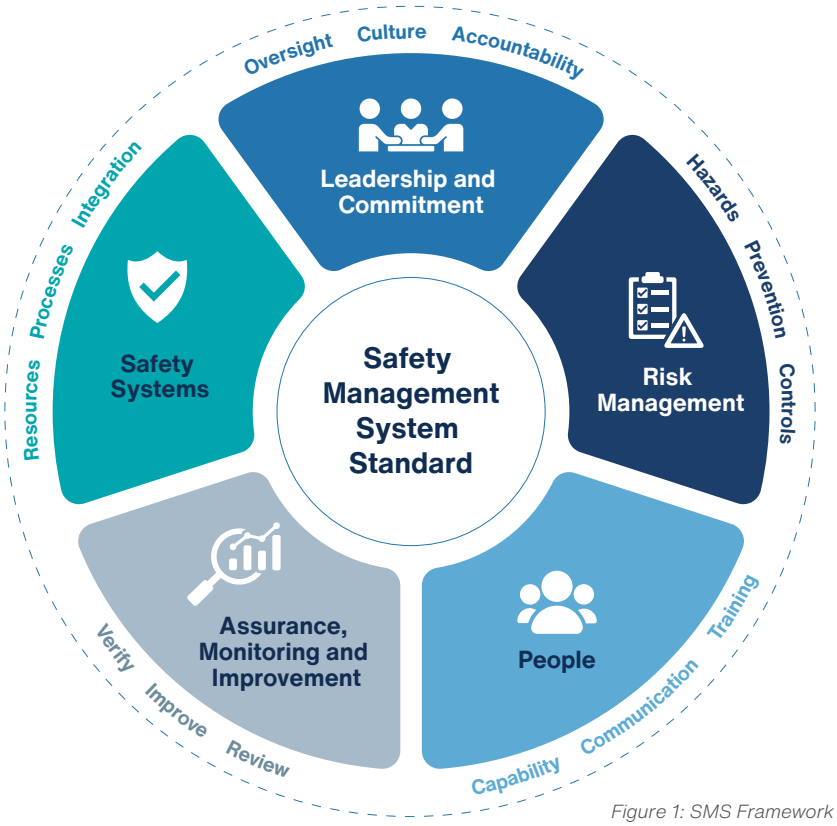

Figure 1: SMS Framework

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Leadership and commitment

Management commitment to safety is demonstrated when business owners and senior leaders actively ensure their operations do not expose workers or the public to unacceptable safety risks.

Under the HVNL, owners and other parties in the Chain of Responsibility must are accountable for safety must demonstrate due diligence through the decisions they make and the behaviours they model. Visible leadership and commitment from management underpin an effective SMS and foster a positive safety culture across day-to-day operations.

Risk management

Effective risk management is a key foundation of a Safety Management System and plays a critical role in keeping workers, the public and road users safe.

Your risk management processes should include identifying and reporting safety-related hazards and incidents, assessing what harm or risk could arise from each hazard, identifying current controls, putting in place any additional controls required to help eliminate or minimise the level of risk so far as is reasonably practicable and monitoring or reviewing the effectiveness of your risk controls.

Compiling and updating a risk register enables you to keep an up-to-date understanding of the risks in your business. More information on Risk management can be found here.

People

Operators must ensure that workers under their control or influence are fit to safely perform their transport related duties. This includes confirming workers are physically and mentally capable, hold the appropriate, licences, knowledge and skills, and have the necessary training to undertake their roles.

Effective communication and consultation processes are also essential to support safe work practices and compliance with safety obligations.

Assurance, monitoring and improvement

Safety assurance, monitoring and improvement ensure that an SMS is operating effectively and achieving its intended safety outcomes. This involves ongoing monitoring, recording and evaluation of safety performance and processes to confirm compliance with documented policies and identify opportunities for improvement.

It also includes managing changes in your transport operations that may introduce new risks and using feedback from audits, reviews, and evaluations to continuously improve safety controls, allowing the SMS to adapt to changes in the operational environment.

Safety Systems

Safety systems are the processes and tools that embed safety into day-to-day operations by clearly defining safety responsibilities, implementing safe work practices and integrating controls into the business's operations.

Effective safety systems link policies, procedures, monitoring and decision making so that safety is managed as part of normal operations. Their purpose is to minimise hazards and risks so far as is reasonably practicable, support a proactive safety culture and maintain compliance.

Further information about SMS in the heavy vehicle industry and useful resources that can easily be applied to your operations can be found here.

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