Appendix B: Guide to ACA–Fatigue

This guide is provided for general guidance only and does not substitute the *Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2025* (HVNL), the Ministerial Standard for Alternative Compliance Hours, the SMS Standard 2026, the National Audit Standard (NAS), the Ministerial Guidelines for Heavy Vehicle Accreditation 2026 or any applicable notices or permits.

Operators should check these instruments at the time of application or audit.

Purpose

This guide summarises the requirements and criteria to support operators seeking Alternative Compliance Accreditation – Fatigue (ACA–Fatigue) under the Heavy Vehicle Accreditation (HVA) scheme.

The information in this guide has been taken from the SMS Standard 2026 and summarised to assist operators to become accredited with ACA–Fatigue. More detailed information is available in the ACA–Fatigue Operator Manual. For the purposes of this Appendix, 'you' means 'the Operator' as identified in the SMS Standard.

ACA–Fatigue allows operators to tailor work and rest hours to better suit their operational needs. In return, operators must demonstrate robust safety systems for managing drivers' fatigue risks.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the HVA Scheme Operator Guideline, which sets out the accreditation application, assessment and auditing processes.

How ACA–Fatigue integrates with GSA

GSA is a mandatory entry requirement for participation in the HVA scheme. To achieve GSA, operators must successfully complete an audit demonstrating that their Safety Management System (SMS) complies with the SMS Standard 2026.

Operators seeking ACA–Fatigue must satisfy additional fatigue management requirements beyond those required for GSA. These requirements are specified in Schedule 1 of the SMS Standard 2026 and are designed to demonstrate an operator's capability to effectively manage fatigue-related risks.

The ACA–Fatigue requirements should be integrated into the operator's broader SMS rather than implemented as a separate or standalone framework.

Note: Operators are encouraged to undertake their GSA and ACA–Fatigue audits at the same time. This can reduce audit costs, minimise duplication of effort and streamline the accreditation process.

Ministerial Standard for Alternative Compliance Hours

In addition to meeting the requirements of the SMS Standard, it is a requirement that operators meet the Ministerial Standard for Alternative Compliance Hours.

This sets out the requirements for ACA–Fatigue accreditation. It defines:

- Work and rest limits – the maximum work and minimum rest that may be approved.
- Split rest breaks – when they may be used and the conditions that apply, if approved.
- Risk Classification System Matrix (RCSM) – the tool that the NHVR must use to assess work and rest hours.
- SMS controls must address fatigue risks – operators must demonstrate controls that reduce the risks identified through the RCSM.

How to incorporate the Ministerial Standard for Alternative Compliance Hours into your SMS

To effectively integrate the Ministerial Standard for Alternative Compliance Hours effectively into your SMS, you should:

- align scheduling and rostering procedures with the work/rest limits
- show how your SMS controls address RCSM identified risks
- demonstrate compliance through evidence.

The NHVR can only approve your application for ACA–Fatigue if it is satisfied that your SMS meets the criteria below:

- GSA requirements of the SMS Standard 2026
- ACA–Fatigue requirements listed in Schedule 1 of the SMS Standard
- Ministerial Standard for Alternative Compliance Hours
- Ministerial Guideline for Heavy Vehicle Accreditation 2026
- HVNL

Requirements

Responsibility and accountability

You must clearly define who is responsible for managing fatigue and what each person is required to do, and make sure these roles, responsibilities and decision-making powers are documented and built into your overall business systems. Senior managers must all have the same understanding of how fatigue risks affect their day-to-day operations. Management must create a just safety culture whereby drivers and staff can report fatigue risks or incidents without fear of reprisal.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Clearly define who is responsible for managing fatigue and make sure they have the authority to act.
- Make sure senior managers regularly check how well fatigue controls are working using information like breach rates, roster changes or fatigue-related incidents.
- Have systems in place so drivers and staff can report fatigue or incidents without fear of blame or punishment.
- Make sure there is regular communication between drivers and management about anything that may affect fatigue.

Scheduling and rostering controls

Scheduling and rostering under ACA–Fatigue are key to managing fatigue risks. You must plan and organise work so drivers can operate safely, both on individual journeys and over longer periods of work.

Under the ACA–Fatigue framework:

- You must keep schedules and rosters recorded, check them regularly and review them often.
- You must carefully manage any changes to schedules to reduce fatigue risks, including changes to start times, longer shifts or extra work.
- Where possible, involve drivers in planning schedules so trips are realistic and can be safely completed.
- When planning work, consider extra fatigue risks such as drivers returning from leave or doing unfamiliar tasks.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Your rostering and scheduling policies must follow the approved alternative compliance hours.
- Record, check and regularly review rosters and schedules.
- Plan work so it can be completed safely within the approved operating limits in normal conditions.
- Have processes to manage fatigue risks if plans change, work runs longer or something unforeseen occurs.
- Ensure drivers can manage their fatigue within the approved limits, including changing their schedule when additional rest is required.
- Ensure that exceeding operating limits only occurs in specific situations but still remains within the limits allowed for ACA–Fatigue and is supported by fatigue controls.

Operating limits controls

Operating limits are a key part of ACA–Fatigue and are designed to match the real fatigue risks in your operation.

Operating limits take into account:

- the type of work being done and how long it takes
- required rest breaks;
- fatigue that builds up over a series of shifts; and
- how the time of day affects fatigue and sleep quality.

Approved limits must be regularly checked and updated as your operation changes. If you go over these limits in certain situations, it must be done in a controlled way, with fatigue controls and proper oversight in place. Even if operating limits are exceeded, approved alternative compliance hours cannot be exceeded.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Set operating limits to match your specific fatigue risks and how your operation runs.
- Take into account work demands, the need for rest, fatigue that builds up over time and the effects of working at different times of day when defining operating limits.
- Check and review operating limits to make sure they still work for your business.
- Have controls in place to manage exceeding limits and make sure there is a valid reason for exceeding limits that is supported by proper fatigue controls.
- Check work and rest records to make sure you stay within approved operating limits.

Technology-enabled controls

ACA–Fatigue recognises that technology can be used to help manage fatigue risk.

Technologies may assist in:

- detecting patterns in fatigue-related incidents
- identifying when someone is impaired by fatigue
- supporting driving safety
- reducing the impact of fatigue-related incidents.

The use of technology is not required but it can be included as part of your overall approach to managing fatigue if it suits your operation.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- If technology is used to manage fatigue, you should build it into your overall fatigue management system.
- Technology should support fatigue management and oversight, not replace it.
- Using technology does not reduce your responsibility to manage fatigue risks.

Fitness for duty, health and wellbeing controls

Ensuring that drivers are fit to drive is a basic requirement of ACA–Fatigue. Being fit to drive takes into account drivers' physical health, mental wellbeing, alertness and being free from the effects of fatigue, illness, injury, drugs, alcohol or certain medications. Under ACA–Fatigue, you must have systems to ensure:

- Drivers are assessed by a doctor as fit to drive a heavy vehicle, in line with Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive guidelines (or another NHVR-approved standard). This includes checks for sleep disorders and other fatigue-related health risks. Drivers aged 49 or under must be checked at least every 3 years, and drivers aged 50 or over must be checked every year.
- Drivers are checked, reviewed or referred for further assessment if their health, fatigue risk or safety performance affects their fitness to drive.
- Drivers check they are fit to drive before and during work, and tell you if they are not fit to continue work for any reason.
- Lifestyle, health and medical factors that could affect fatigue are managed and considered when developing rosters, schedules and journey plans.
- Medical advice is considered when assigning work.

Health and wellbeing are a part of compliance requirements and are ongoing risks that need to be actively managed. You should provide information and support to help drivers with healthy sleep practices and general health and wellbeing, as this helps to prevent fatigue.

If you use two-up driving, or drivers rest in the vehicle overnight, proper arrangements must be in place to ensure that drivers can properly rest and recover.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Have systems in place to make sure drivers are fit to drive before and during work, including consideration of their health, fatigue levels, illness and any impairment.
- Ensure medical fitness requirements are met and managed in line with required standards, including the regular review of sleep-related risks.
- Make sure your drivers are aware that they are required to assess their own fitness to drive and to notify you if they are not fit to drive for any reason.
- Take into account medical advice and health related information when assigning work.

- Have arrangements in place to encourage driver health and wellbeing as part of fatigue risk management.

Workplace and vehicle conditions

Workplace and vehicle conditions support fatigue prevention. Under ACA–Fatigue, operators must make sure their workplaces, including their vehicles, support safe work and allow drivers to have proper rest periods This includes:

- vehicle cabins and sleeper berths are set up to keep drivers comfortable and allow drivers to have restful sleep;
- facilities that allow drivers to rest and recover when they are away from home; and
- complying with safety and vehicle standards that affect fatigue risk;
- if drivers are required to sleep in vehicles, those vehicles must be suitable for sleeping.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Workplace and vehicle conditions help prevent and manage fatigue.
- Vehicles and rest facilities allow drivers to have the chance for proper rest and sleep.
- Arrangements relating to workplace and vehicle conditions follow applicable safety and vehicle standards that affect fatigue risk.
- Extra controls are used where drivers need to rest in vehicles away from home.

Training and competency

Safe operations under ACA–Fatigue rely on skilled, informed decisions. You must ensure that all staff involved in managing fatigue – especially schedulers and managers – have the knowledge and skills required to manage complex fatigue variables.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Ensure staff involved in managing or operating within the fatigue system have the appropriate knowledge for their role, including understanding the policies and procedures and recognising the physical signs of fatigue.
- Check that staff demonstrate the ability to manage fatigue risk in practice by meeting the following requirements, or an alternative equivalent:
  - Drivers: if the driver operates a heavy vehicle under ACA–Fatigue they can demonstrate competence with TLIF0030 - Apply a fatigue risk management system, or any previously recognised fatigue management qualification.
  - Schedulers/managers: a staff member who is a scheduler or supervises drivers and scheduling staff can demonstrate competence with TLIF0031 - Administer a fatigue risk management system, or any previously recognised fatigue management qualification.
- Clearly explain fatigue-related responsibilities when staff start a new role or when staff move to a new work environment, so they can apply their skills in the context of the operation.
- Keep your knowledge up to date through refresher training or extra training after fatigue incidents or near misses so it reflects actual experience.
- Ensure staff can apply fatigue management effectively in their day-to-day work and not just hold a qualification.

Review and continuous improvement

ACA–Fatigue requires regular internal reviews to allow you to verify that your fatigue management system is working and identify where it can be improved. Internal review includes:

- regular review of fatigue management practices against the operation's policies, procedures and operating limits;
- processes to identify, report, investigate and record issues and nonconformances;
- investigating incidents to see if fatigue was a contributing factor; and
- taking action to solve problems and to ensure issues do not reoccur.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Monitor fatigue-related information, including work and rest records, roster changes and driver feedback to ensure that fatigue controls are working properly in day-to-day operations.
- Check that review processes can identify clear breaches and patterns that indicate fatigue risk is increasing, before they result in an incident.
- Review incidents and near-misses to see how much fatigue played a part.
- Where you identify an issue, take action to correct the root cause (e.g. unreasonable scheduling or not enough training) rather than just the immediate issue.
- Use results from reviews to update fatigue policies, schedules and training so risks are better managed over time.
- Review your fatigue system regularly, with the review timing based on the risk level of the work and rest arrangements.

Evidence

Maintaining reliable documents and records is essential to managing fatigue. You must keep written policies, procedures and instructions that explain how you manage fatigue risks across your operation. Records are kept showing:

- compliance with approved operating limits
- implementation of fatigue management controls
- training and competence of relevant personnel
- outcomes of internal reviews and actions taken to correct issues
- document control processes to ensure that fatigue management documents are up to date, approved, easy to find and that changes are recorded over time.

What the criteria mean and what you must do to comply

- Keep records, such as work and rest diaries or electronic logs, that provide a reliable account of actual operations and show you follow the approved ACA–Fatigue operating limits.
- Ensure written policies and procedures are up to date and accessible for relevant staff, helping them to do their jobs safely.
- Keep records that show the application of fatigue controls, such as roster audits or fatigue-related training results, rather than relying on a plan alone.
- Keep proof of the appropriate actions you took and tracked where fatigue risks or breaches are identified.
- Keep records in a format and for a length of time that allow for audit and review, without creating more administrative tasks than needed for the risk profile of the business.