NHVR
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

SAFETY BULLETIN

SB – 2018 – 01 Issued: December 2018

Cleaning of heavy vehicles prior to inspection

Purpose

The purpose of this safety bulletin is to highlight the risks associated with carrying out visual inspections of heavy vehicles that haven't been appropriately cleaned and prepared by the operator of the vehicle.

Issue

In August 2014, the driver of a prime mover semitrailer combination was killed after the prime mover's front suspension failed, causing the driver to lose control of the combination. During a coronial inquiry into the incident, it was highlighted that, during an inspection of the vehicle after the incident, a notable build-up of contaminants was identified in the region of the failed suspension component.

Vehicle inspections are a routine part of operating a heavy vehicle, both for regulatory purposes (on-road or programmed inspections) or as part of an operator's vehicle maintenance system (VMS). These checks are intended to ensure:

- the vehicle is in good working order and complies with the *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation*
- any maintenance issues are identified and rectified before they impact the safe operation of the vehicle.

To ensure possible safety, compliance or maintenance issues can be readily identified, a vehicle, and its components and structures must be clean and free of large deposits of contaminants, such as grime, dirt, mud or lubricants that might obscure damage, cracks or other faults.

Action required

Heavy vehicle operators

Heavy vehicle operators should ensure their VMS:

- includes periodic cleaning of vehicles, their components and structures so that thorough visual inspections can be performed
- is designed to ensure safety critical components are examined in their entirety at regular intervals, so that damage, cracks or other faults:
  - are identified as soon as possible
  - can be rectified before they pose a safety risk.

Vehicle maintenance personnel

Personnel involved in the maintenance and routine checking (inspection) of heavy vehicles should ensure they comply with the operator's VMS in relation to cleaning of vehicles, their components and structures.

Before conducting a check or carrying out maintenance, where a component or structure is not suitably clean and free of large deposits of contaminants, it should first be cleaned to allow a thorough inspection to be conducted.

When checking or maintaining a vehicle and its components and structures, the maintenance person should consider that faults and failures have the potential to occur at any point where a component or structure is subject to stresses. It's strongly recommended that components or structures are inspected in their entirety, rather than only partially inspected.

Vehicle inspectors

For a periodic regulatory inspection (i.e. annual inspection), the inspectors should consider whether they are able to adequately inspect the vehicle to determine its mechanical condition.

Before an inspection is carried out, inspectors should ensure the vehicle has been sufficiently cleaned to allow for a thorough inspection of its components and structures. The vehicle should be free from excessive contaminants, such as:

- grime, dirt or mud
- lubricants, such as grease or oil
- any other substance, such as road kill or chemical spills that would obscure the inspector's view of components or structures.

If inspectors are not able to inspect the vehicle because of excessive contaminants, they should refuse to inspect the vehicle until it is presented in a (clean) state that allows them to perform a thorough inspection.

Further information

Further information relevant to this safety bulletin can be obtained by contacting 1300 MYNHVR (1300 696 487) or emailing vehiclestandards@nhvr.gov.au.

Related information

For further information about:

- developing an effective VMS – refer to the *Master Industry Code of Practice*
- heavy vehicle inspection standards and critical safety components – refer to the *National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual (NHVIM)*
- heavy vehicle manufacturer's specifications – refer to the *Heavy Vehicle Standards, Australian Design Rules (ADRs) and the NHVIM*.