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NHVAS role extends to fatigue management

NHVAS accreditation will support new heavy vehicle driver fatigue laws in 2008; in addition to existing self-compliance modules for maintenance and mass management

Fatigue Management Accreditation

National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation (NHVAS) modules were developed to support the National Transport Commission's (NTC) world-leading Heavy Vehicle Driver Fatigue (HVDF) reform, which was approved by the Australian Transport Council (ATC) in February 2007. The new laws will take effect on an agreed date in 2008.

Benefits of HVDF accreditation include:

- improved fatigue management practices;
- meeting 'general duty' obligations;
- better rostering flexibility;
- alignment with OH&S laws;
- assure customers that fatigue risks are being managed effectively;
- improved road safety; and
- potential for reduced insurance premiums.

The two NHVAS modules are:

Basic Fatigue Management (BFM) – BFM helps manage the risk of working long hours and night work. In return, accredited heavy vehicle operators get a greater say in their work and rest schedules.

Advanced Fatigue Management (AFM) – operators can develop their own fatigue management system to meet the specific risks of their business. AFM is based on the current Fatigue Management Pilot (FMP).

Industry schemes (such as Trucksafe) can develop their own equivalent accreditation, which will facilitate access into NHVAS. Bus operators can also access NHVAS; however a specific scheme will be developed in the future for buses.



BFM and AFM accreditation standards ensure that everyone achieves the same standard of compliance.

Accredited operators must ensure driver fatigue is actively monitored and managed. Regular internal audits of records (work diary pages, pay records, fuel records etc) are required to demonstrate compliance.

Periodic independent audits will determine whether the accreditation is renewed. The auditor can ask for some work practices to be improved before renewal.

Audits or inspections can also be triggered at any time to verify the accreditation standards are being maintained.

Further work to support the fatigue modules – including training requirements, auditor competencies and a draft audit matrix – is underway. NHVAS Business Rules have been amended to accommodate the new fatigue modules.

Commonwealth Fuel Tax Credit Scheme

In 2006, the Commonwealth introduced legislation to replace the Energy Grants Credits Scheme with a fuel tax credit. The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS) issued guidelines outlining four criteria by which a road transport operator may be eligible for the fuel tax credit.

All vehicles manufactured on or after 1 January 1996 are *automatically* eligible for the fuel tax credit. Vehicles manufactured prior to 1 January 1996 could become eligible for the tax credit if the operator is in an audited maintenance program *certified* by the Commonwealth.

http://www.dotars.gov.au/roads/environment/fuel_tax_credit/index.aspx

The ATC has *approved* changes to the NHVAS Business Rules and Standards for the Maintenance Module to achieve certification. NHVAS is now listed by DoTARS as one of the approved audited maintenance schemes.

Cutting Red Tape: Audit Pool

A new auditor certification scheme was introduced in October 2006; creating a pool of auditors competent to audit all three major heavy vehicle accreditation schemes (NHVAS, WA Heavy Vehicle Accreditation and TruckSafe). Existing scheme auditors have two years to transition to the new pool.

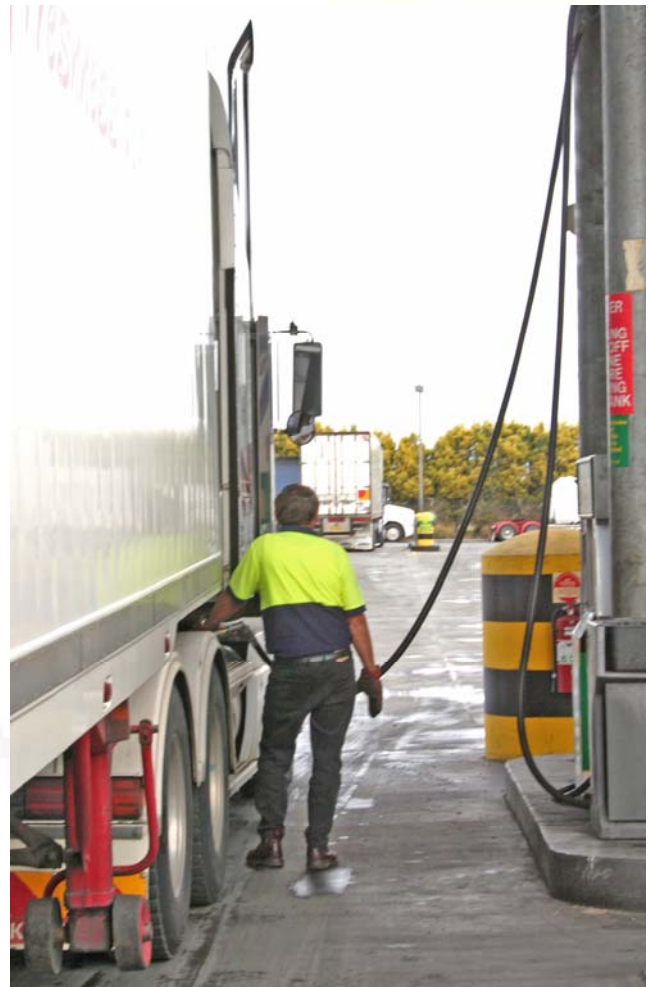
The major accreditation scheme owners also decided to form a Scheme Owners' Group to harmonise their business rules and practices. This should improve the efficiency of heavy vehicle accreditation and lower costs for transport operators.

For example, a standard report format has been agreed to reduce duplication. Operators accredited in more than one accreditation scheme can now use the same audit report format.

Concessional Mass Limits

Concessional Mass Limits (CML) was introduced in July 2006. By complying with NHVAS Mass Management, general access vehicles can broadly retain the old NAASRA mass tolerance levels.

Mass Management now includes new suspension maintenance requirements (Standard 8), which also applies to higher mass limits applications.



Accreditation framework review

The NTC canvassed potential improvements to the current NHVAS accreditation system in a discussion paper in 2006. The accreditation review will help ensure accreditation schemes continue to meet future needs.

A draft policy will be released for public comment later this year.

More information, including the current version of the NHVAS Business Rules, can be found on the NTC website www.ntc.gov.au.