

HEAVY VEHICLE STABILITY - TASMANIA

REPORT from HeTSAC to
Minister for Infrastructure
on Ministerial Terms Of Reference

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1 INTRODUCTION

In July 2005 expert transport consultancy firm Transport Engineering Research New Zealand Ltd (TERNZ) completed a report on “An Assessment of Heavy Vehicle Truck Safety in Tasmania” (the report). The report was commissioned to analyse Tasmanian heavy vehicle crash reports and investigate the possible causes of crashes.

The report, released in August 2005, concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that the heavy vehicle safety situation in Tasmania was out of line with the rest of Australia. In short, it concluded that there was no crisis.

However, the report provided a number of recommendations aimed at improving heavy vehicle safety.

The recommendations indicated a clear role for the industry in leading, managing, sponsoring and progressing some possible changes to improve heavy vehicle safety in Tasmania, and, accordingly, a Heavy Truck Safety Advisory Council (HeTSAC) was established to explore safety initiatives. HeTSAC held its inaugural meeting on 27 September 2005 and steadily progressed through the recommendations outlined in the report.

One of the key recommendations of the report was to improve the rollover stability of the poorest performing heavy vehicles. In response to this recommendation, in early 2006, TERNZ was commissioned to undertake a survey of Tasmania’s heavy vehicle fleet to determine the current level of rollover stability and to assess the implications of setting a minimum standard. The TERNZ “Report on Survey of Heavy Vehicle Rollover Stability in Tasmania” (the survey report) was received in October 2006. It surveyed 96 heavy vehicles that were representative of the Tasmanian fleet.

In broad terms the survey report found that at least 12.5% of laden vehicles in Tasmania have poor rollover stability. These vehicles have Static Roll Threshold (SRT) values below 0.35g, which is the regulated level in New Zealand and is also the minimum level proposed by the National Transport Commission in their Performance Based Standards’ (PBS), alternative compliance regime. The survey report also found that 36% of log trucks would not be able to meet the SRT requirement without either some reduction in load capacity or an increase in the length of logs being transported. Research has shown that vehicles with poor rollover stability have a higher rollover crash rate than other vehicles. Therefore, improving the rollover stability of the poorest performing vehicles is a strategy to reducing the rollover crash rate.

In late November 2006, the Minister for Infrastructure wrote to the Chairman of HeTSAC seeking the advice of HeTSAC on measures that should be taken to improve heavy vehicle stability. In specific terms, he sought advice on the following issues:

- The impact on the transport industry of introducing a phased in regulatory SRT requirement of 0.35g for all new and existing vehicles;
- The capacity of existing vehicles to be modified to meet a SRT requirement of 0.35g;
- The options for changing operating practices to enable existing vehicles to meet a SRT requirement of 0.35g;

- Issues associated with implementation and ongoing regulation of a SRT requirement e.g. practical issues related to measuring vehicles;
- The identification of actions that are needed to complement the introduction of a SRT requirement;
- Options for requiring the use of new vehicle technology such as electronic stability control; and
- The role the transport industry can play to improve stability.

At its meeting on 24 November 2006, HeTSAC members agreed to provide formal responses and comments on the issues highlighted in the Minister's letter by 23 February 2007. The Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER) agreed to undertake research, provide advice, address industry groups etc, and provide a report to the next meeting of HeTSAC.

Following the November meeting, DIER wrote to other key stakeholders not represented on HeTSAC seeking their views on the matters under consideration. Between December 2006 and early February 2007, DIER either met or held telephone discussions with approximately 30 companies and organisations from various sectors of the industry, including HeTSAC members. A number of written responses were received. During the consultative process all industry sectors were very positive about progressing measures to improve heavy vehicle stability.

While it was not possible to contact all operators of heavy vehicles during the consultative period, every effort was made to contact those that represented the sectors of the transport industry most likely to be adversely impacted by the introduction of a SRT limit.

Consequently operators of heavy vehicles that cart quarry products were not contacted directly. However, the peak groups that represent the transport industry were contacted and their views sought.

This report from HeTSAC to the Minister for Infrastructure summarises the issues raised during the consultation process with industry groups and other relevant issues considered by HeTSAC. It also details several options and HeTSAC's recommended approach.

2 OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

As a State with limited rail transport and a decentralised population, Tasmania has traditionally relied on heavy vehicle road transport to convey goods to and from its major ports and between its principal population centres.

Tasmania's topography and often mountainous terrain with narrow, winding roads, pose unique challenges for heavy vehicle operations.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring that travel on Tasmanian roads is as safe as it possibly can be and that heavy vehicle operators make their contribution to ensuring this safety commitment is met.

Because the database of heavy vehicle crash statistics in Tasmania is small, a slight increase or a trend in crash incidents tends to be magnified in the statistics.

SRT is one of the 20 safety and infrastructure protection PBS being developed by the National Transport Commission, to allow innovation in vehicle design outside the current prescriptive tightly defined regulated standards. PBS focuses on how well the vehicle behaves on the road, rather than how big and heavy (length and mass) it is. The SRT limit used under PBS is 0.35g.

Industry awareness and understanding of the impact of introducing a SRT limit was relatively low at the start of the consultative process. Most operators advised that they aimed to purchase vehicles they believed would be stable and safe.

The survey report found that around 87 % of the Tasmanian heavy vehicle fleet could meet the minimum SRT requirement if it was introduced tomorrow.

3 ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

The impact on the transport industry of introducing a phased in regulatory SRT requirement of 0.35g for all new and existing vehicles

Generally operators expressed a preparedness to purchase heavy vehicles that would meet a SRT limit of 0.35g, provided that vehicles did not come with reduced productivity or significant increased costs. However, operators are strongly of the view that introducing a SRT limit of 0.35g should not be seen as the only option. They felt that a more holistic approach, that encompassed driver training and industry awareness and education, on issues such as heavy vehicle stability (including SRT) and other safety matters, would deliver greater and longer lasting road safety benefits.

SRT compliant vehicles would appear to be available in the standard range of vehicle configurations used in this state to carry most commodity types, (livestock and low density timbers and short logs being notable exceptions) without reductions in payload.

The impact of a 0.35g SRT limit will vary between industry sectors and will be hardest felt by those operators and industry sectors who will need to replace non compliant vehicles ahead of their normal replacement schedule, upgrade that vehicle or purchase new vehicles that are SRT compliant, but at a loss of productivity.

Non-SRT compliant vehicles that cannot economically be upgraded would have little resale value in Tasmania under a regulatory scheme.

Livestock transport would be the industry that would have the most difficulty in changing current practice to meet a regulated SRT approach.

The National Transport Commission considers any mandatory approach to the introduction of a SRT requirement to be unfair in cases where the operator may have a low SRT vehicle but a clean rollover record (i.e. good drivers driving to the conditions). A better way to approach this would be to target the industries that have the worst rollover record to provide a focus for the industry to clean up its act.

Livestock Transporters

Under the Livestock Loading Scheme (LLS), livestock transport vehicles are currently able to volumetric load and operate at 4.6 metres height. In Tasmania, livestock transporters use semi trailers and B Doubles, but under the LLS, mass limits are only limited to vehicle manufacturer mass rating. This means they can operate in excess of general mass limits and at times higher mass limits.

It is unlikely that a 4 deck sheep and 2 deck cattle trailer could be manufactured that meets both a SRT limit of 0.35g and delivers the same levels of productivity currently available to livestock operators operating under the LLS.

This industry sector will need to work with trailer manufacturers to assess what options are available to ensure trailers are manufactured to meet acceptable SRT levels, and what practices could be changed to maximise the stability of livestock vehicles.

To meet 0.35g SRT, New Zealand operators typically use twin steer trucks and 4 axle dog trailers at a maximum mass of 44 tonne and length of 20 metres to transport 4 decks of sheep and 2 decks of cattle. At this mass, the twin steer truck and dog trailer combination would only carry similar or slightly lesser loads to the semi trailer stock vehicles that currently operate in Tasmania, despite the truck and dog trailer combination being a much larger vehicle.

It is estimated that 40% of livestock transporters in Tasmania also carry general freight. A truck and dog trailer is not as versatile as other vehicle configurations especially for those livestock carriers who also undertake general freight cartage towing conventional flat bed semi trailers behind a prime mover.

One of the largest transporters of livestock in this state advised that SRT compliant truck and dog trailer combinations would significantly impact on their business. They currently send loaded stock trailers (semi trailers and B Doubles) to the mainland where the driver of a prime mover picks them up. If they had to use truck and dog trailers they would have to send that vehicle and its driver to the mainland too, significantly increasing their costs. The loss of productivity with this combination would also see their costs rise dramatically.

Livestock transporters in Tasmania appear to purchase second hand equipment with only about 10% of trailers purchased each year being brand new. A brand new tri axle stock crate that is not SRT compliant costs about \$150,000. A new twin steer truck and trailer combination would cost approximately \$500,000.

If all new stock trucks were required to meet a 0.35g SRT level (with existing vehicles under some grandfathering arrangement), then new vehicles would not have the same operating/payload capacity as the existing fleet. This could lead to operators choosing to maintain existing vehicles beyond the normal economic life of the vehicle, leading to possible roadworthiness and other safety issues.

Livestock transporters advised that the livestock industry is worth approximately \$600 million annually to the Tasmanian economy.

Any reduction in carrying capacity of livestock vehicles will have an immediate impact on farmers and meat processors, who will face increased cartage costs.

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association advised that if livestock transporters were required to operate less productive vehicles in order to meet a 0.35g SRT, then the cost of transporting livestock would increase. These increased costs would reduce the capacity of Tasmanian farmers to compete with their mainland counterparts on interstate and international markets.

Timber Transporters

There was a general consensus within the industry that it was possible to purchase SRT compliant vehicles (verified by the fact that the survey report indicated that 64% of log transport vehicles would meet a SRT limit of 0.35g for most loads). However, log transport contractors are required to cart pulp logs, sawlogs, peeler logs and pine logs, with some also carting woodchips. Timber harvesting practices, tree lengths and consumer demands are all factors that help determine what sized log is available for transport. This means that load heights will vary considerably between the various products.

It will be very difficult to cart small logs and low-density pine logs on existing vehicles and achieve both 0.35g SRT while maintaining existing levels of productivity.

The number of options may be reduced for woodchip transporters. Nevertheless, to make them SRT compliant, lower profile tyres and smaller diameter rims are some options that trailer manufacturers could consider when designing chip trailers. It is worth noting that there are a number of existing combinations transporting woodchip that would meet or exceed a 0.35g SRT limit. This includes one recently purchased new B Double configured woodchip truck.

Advice from a local manufacturer of log trailers (jinker, skeletal and B Doubles) is that the cost of a new SRT compliant skeletal trailer would be between \$80,000 - \$130,000 and a new jinker \$40,000 - \$80,000, with the cost depending on what existing equipment the operator has. The cost of a SRT compliant trailer and non-compliant trailer would be the same.

Most operators believed that the introduction of a SRT limit would have an immediate effect on the equipment purchasing decisions of operators, as most would look to purchase SRT compliant vehicles.

Most operators favoured a 5-year phase in period to replace existing equipment because it would give operators plenty of time to budget for new gear and sell existing gear. Further, it fits in with the usual vehicle leasing arrangements.

If a SRT limit were introduced in Tasmania, non-compliant trailers would most likely be sold on the mainland because they would have minimal value in Tasmania.

Other Freight Transporters

Those freight transporters who operate vehicles that would not meet a 0.35g SRT face similar vehicle replacement issues and costs as other transport operators.

Those transporters who carry sealed containers or operate vehicles with high sided containers would face additional costs associated with checking the heights of loads to ensure vehicles operated within the 0.35g SRT limits.

The capacity of existing vehicles to be modified to meet a SRT requirement of 0.35g

Most stakeholders advised that in many cases it would not be cost effective to spend large amounts of money to make an old grossly non-compliant trailer, compliant with a 0.35g SRT limit.

Some log jinkers may be made SRT compliant by increasing the length of a jinker pole at a cost of between \$1,500 and \$5,000.

The livestock industry on the other hand will encounter major issues. Modifying existing vehicles to meet a 0.35g SRT limit would most likely be unachievable, if current productivity levels were to be maintained.

The options for changing operating practices to enable existing vehicles to meet a SRT requirement of 0.35g

Within the log transport sector there appears to be a number of operating practices that could be modified to ensure vehicle loads are kept as low as possible. Some log cutting practices could change to enable longer pulp logs to be provided to operators of tri axle log trailers (jinkers and

skeletal). This would result in those vehicles operating as close as possible to the 19m general access overall permitted length limit. Woodchip mills can accept logs at least to 13.5m and actually prefer the logs to be as long as possible.

There is a growing commitment from companies that can influence timber harvesting to review current practices, with the view to putting in place changes that will help support vehicles meeting a 0.35g SRT.

Issues associated with implementation and ongoing regulation of a SRT requirement e.g. practical issues related to measuring vehicles

Enforcement

To determine whether a vehicle is SRT compliant, enforcement officers will need to check the weight of the vehicle and the height of the load.

Checking sealed loads to determine the actual load height will be problematic. Sealed containers pose OH&S risks if they are opened on the side of the road. The load inside could have shifted and may fall out when the doors are opened, or in some other way it might pose a risk to enforcement officers. Opening sealed containers may also introduce contamination and quarantine issues.

High sided containers like woodchip bins and open top containers will need to be climbed if the load height is to be measured. This introduces another layer of OH&S issues to be managed on the roadside by enforcement officers and will require specialist training and safety equipment to minimise OH&S issues.

Transporters of products contained in sealed containers and high-sided bins face similar issues to those that would be encountered by enforcement officers. Sealed containers from the mainland would need to be physically checked to determine load heights if a Tasmanian transport company was to be satisfied that the vehicle being used to transport the container was operating within the height limits for it to remain 0.35g SRT compliant.

DIER

If a mandatory approach to introducing a 0.35g SRT limit were chosen, a project team would need to be established within DIER to develop the necessary policy framework and regulation changes. The project team would also need to establish and organise the training of a core group of static roll threshold assessors. Enforcement officers would also need to be trained on how to check that heavy vehicles are compliant. The project team would also be responsible for consulting with, and communicating the changes to, industry.

It is estimated that the project team would need to comprise at least three officers and would take about 18 months to complete the project, at a cost of around \$290,000.

It is estimated that 3 additional Transport Inspectors would be required to effectively enforce a mandatory SRT limit, at a cost of about \$260,000 per annum. As an alternative, the cost of enforcing a mandatory SRT limit could be absorbed, however this would come at the cost of a reduction in other enforcement activities performed by DIER's Transport Inspectors. This would have a negative impact on heavy vehicle safety.

Industry will expect that DIER offer support for any agreed initiatives including the use of the SRT calculator. The impact this will have on DIER resources is currently unclear.

The identification of actions that are needed to complement the introduction of a SRT requirement

Driver training is considered to be the key to improving safety. Unless there is comprehensive driver training and industry education provided and made compulsory then simply requiring heavy vehicles to meet a minimum SRT level will not, on its own, lead to safety improvements.

Drivers require different skills depending on the configurations of the vehicle being driven and the products carried. Carrying logs on a semi trailer is a much different task from carrying livestock. Driving a truck and dog trailer requires different skill sets and knowledge from driving a semi trailer.

Without training and monitoring there is a risk some drivers will simply view a more stable vehicle as one that can be driven more quickly around corners. The New Zealand experience showed this to be the case with higher speed rollover crashes appearing after the introduction of the SRT limit was introduced.

Some operators go to considerable lengths to test the competency of new drivers while others do few, if any, checks to satisfy themselves of the competency of new drivers. This, together with the overall shortages of drivers, can lead to a driver with low skills being offered a truck driver position.

Operators who have invested heavily in driver training reported that their crash rates are down and productivity is up.

Clearly if any improvements are to be forthcoming in terms of reduced heavy vehicle rollover crashes, driver training and monitoring needs to be part of any package of changes.

As indicated in the survey report there are also industry practice changes, such as harvesting practices leading to longer logs that could be implemented that would also complement an improvement in SRT levels.

Options for requiring the use of new vehicle technology such as electronic stability control

Discussions were held with a supplier of electronic braking systems (EBS) that incorporate electronic stability controls (ESC). This technology is relatively new to Australia and the supplier is selling approximately 60 systems each month. Very few trailers are retrofitted with these systems.

While these systems do deliver significant safety advantages they are not foolproof and a vehicle being driven in a grossly inappropriate way will still rollover.

While there are some operators in Tasmania that have fitted EBS to their vehicles the majority of operators are not fully conversant with these systems. Some operators did indicate that they would be considering using this new technology in the future while others expressed some concerns.

Some operators advised that they are actively considering introducing new technology such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to help manage their business and improve safety.

Operators and trailer manufacturers are encouraged to fully consider all new vehicle technology, especially those that will assist in managing driver behaviour/performance and increase safety.

The role the transport industry can play to improve stability.

Industry awareness of SRT

Industry awareness and understanding of the impact of introducing a SRT limit was relatively low at the commencement of the consultative process. Most operators advised that they aim to purchase vehicles that they believe will be stable and safe.

Some operators who initially felt they had a good understanding of heavy vehicle stability and expressed support for introducing a SRT limit, reviewed their position once the impacts on their industry sector and their business became clearer to them. Having vehicles that meet a 0.35g SRT limit was recognised by most industry sectors as important but it was not seen, on its own, as the solution to preventing rollover crashes. Driver training, industry awareness of heavy vehicle stability issues, driver behaviour, operator behaviour and other safety related issues were considered to be equally important issues that must be addressed if heavy vehicle safety improvements are to be achieved.

Operator Training

Training for truck operators is equally as critical. It is important that operators become more aware of heavy vehicle safety issues and consider them when making decisions in relation to appointing new drivers, monitoring driver performance, rostering drivers, managing fatigue and considering heavy vehicle stability issues when purchasing new or upgrading existing vehicles.

Code of Practice

An industry developed Code of Practice, with Government support, was raised by the forest sector as a way that industry could implement significant safety improvements within specific industry sectors. Discussions with industry representatives, especially those in the forest sector, indicate that there would be considerable support for a Code of Practice, over simply introducing a mandatory 0.35g SRT limit by regulation. The Code of Practice was viewed as a mechanism to give industry information and advice in respect of heavy vehicle stability, vehicle configurations, driver employment, training assessment and fatigue. Several other sectors strongly supported the concept of a Code of Practice.

Any changes to improve road safety will need strong industry ownership and an industry developed, generic Code of Practice should achieve this.

The importance and value of companies who engage transport operators also having ownership of a Code of Practice cannot be understated. Where compliance with a Code of Practice is built into contract negotiations and audited throughout the contract period, commercial pressures will help ensure that compliance rates are high.

Already some transport companies are required to demonstrate competencies in relation to safety and other operating standards, when tendering for work. The concept of a Code of Practice would not be foreign to those companies.

Giving industry the opportunity to better manage safety issues, including heavy vehicle stability, through the introduction and management of a Code of Practice, has the very real potential of bringing about lasting road safety improvements.

Timber companies have indicated a preparedness to work with contractors to introduce a Code of Practice, with the view to all their contractors meeting the Code of Practice as part of future contract requirements.

A period of two years is considered to be sufficient time to develop and implement a Code of Practice. Monitoring progress with the development of the Code of Practice, against set timeframes, would be the responsibility of HeTSAC. At the end of the two years the Code of Practice would be set in regulations, perhaps in a similar fashion to the way public passenger vehicle operators are required to meet additional safety requirements under their transport operator accreditation schemes.

If progress with developing the Code of Practice fails to meet agreed milestones or stalls, or if there is a sudden increase in the number of rollover crashes, then Government could immediately review its position and consider the mandatory introduction of measures to improve heavy vehicle stability (including SRT).

Funding

There was also a view within industry that it was not unreasonable for industry to be expected to meet reasonable costs associated with improving heavy vehicle safety.

Most sectors indicated a strong desire to improve their public image. Being able to demonstrate to the general public that they were willing and able to take steps to improve heavy vehicle safety, was seen as being a positive way to achieve this.

Stakeholders recognised the gains that their business and industry would achieve if they had better trained drivers, safer vehicles and, most importantly, fewer crashes.

Having regard to all the benefits that will accrue, it is difficult to justify substantial Government funding incentives to encourage improved heavy vehicle safety changes. Nevertheless Government support would be provided through assistance with the development of a Code of Practice and the subsequent setting of that Code in regulations. Government will continue to fund on road enforcement activity to ensure there is a level playing field for those operators who comply with road safety laws.

4 OPTIONS

While improving heavy vehicle stability is an important objective, simply introducing regulations that set a mandatory SRT limit for heavy vehicles, is unlikely, on its own, to deliver the significant and lasting safety gains desired.

Industry education and driver training are also important objectives, but they are also unlikely, on their own, to deliver the desired improved road safety outcomes.

Having regard to all the issues that can influence heavy vehicle rollover crashes, it is clear that a more holistic approach is required.

During the consultation process the heavy vehicle industry gave a clear and strong message that they want the Tasmanian heavy vehicle fleet to be as safe as possible and that they are prepared to seriously consider a broad range of safety related changes.

A range of options, as outlined below, were considered. Options 1, 2 and 3 are not recommended for the reasons outlined.

Option 4 is preferred. This includes a Code of Practice that is developed by industry, and subsequently set in regulations. This will enable changes to be progressed, with the support and ownership of the heavy vehicle industry. The education and training components of the Code will ensure that heavy vehicle operators and drivers become aware of all the key issues that impact on road safety in their industry and give encouragement for systems to be put in place that will ensure safety gains are made.

OPTION 1 Introduce regulations that require all new heavy vehicles to meet a minimum SRT level of 0.35g, with an industry education program and mandatory heavy vehicle driver and operator training scheme

Introduce regulatory changes that require new (first registered in Tasmania) trailers that have a gross trailer mass of more than 10 tonnes and a body height or load height exceeding 2.8 metres and new (first registered in Tasmania) heavy motor vehicles with a GVM exceeding 12 tonnes, to meet a minimum SRT level of 0.35g for the load they are carrying. New vehicles would be required to meet the SRT limit from 12 months after the introduction of new regulations.

In association, undertake an industry education program aimed at increasing the industry's awareness of heavy vehicle stability and develop a mandatory heavy vehicle driver and operator training scheme to train drivers and operators about heavy vehicle stability and how to prevent rollover crashes. The mandatory operator and driver training scheme would be funded by industry on a user pays basis.

Comments

This option will not deliver the lasting road safety gains that will be achieved through the approach recommended in Option 4 and is therefore **not** recommended.

OPTION 2 Introduce regulations that require new and existing vehicles to meet a minimum SRT level of 0.35g, with an industry education program and mandatory heavy vehicle driver and operator training scheme

Introduce regulatory changes that require trailers that have a gross trailer mass of more than 10 tonnes and a body height or load height exceeding 2.8 metres and heavy motor vehicles with a GVM exceeding 12 tonnes, to meet a minimum SRT level of 0.35g for the load they are carrying. New vehicles would be required to meet an SRT level of 0.35g from 12 months after the introduction of new regulations, with existing vehicles being required to meet that SRT level within 5 years.

In association, undertake an industry education program aimed at increasing the industry's awareness of heavy vehicle stability and develop a mandatory heavy vehicle driver and operator training scheme to train drivers and operators about heavy vehicle stability and how to prevent rollover crashes. The mandatory operator and driver training scheme would be funded by industry on a user pays basis.

Comments

This option will not deliver the lasting road safety gains that will be achieved through the approach recommended in Option 4. Existing non SRT compliant vehicles that cannot be economically upgraded will have little resale value in Tasmania and create economic hardship for operators. This option is therefore **not** recommended.

OPTION 3 Require industry education and driver/operator training

Undertake an industry education program aimed at increasing the industry's awareness of heavy vehicle stability and develop a heavy vehicle driver and operator training scheme, to train drivers and operators about heavy vehicle stability and how to prevent rollover crashes.

Comments

As a stand alone option, this will not deliver the lasting road safety gains that will be achieved through the approach recommended in Option 4 and is therefore **not** recommended.

OPTION 4 Require the heavy vehicle industry to develop a comprehensive Code of Practice, for regulation, that will address issues that affect heavy vehicle safety and lead to safer practices.

Require industry to develop a Code of Practice that addresses issues such as heavy vehicle stability (including SRT), driver and operator training, driver and operator behaviour and general safety advice that will lead to a reduction in heavy vehicle crashes. The Code of Practice would be set in regulations after 2 years.

In association, HeTSAC to be responsible for monitoring progress with the development of the Code of Practice, against set timeframes agreed to by Government. There will be requirements for industry to progressively adopt changes throughout the 2 year period. HeTSAC will also need to encourage the immediate implementation of changes during the 2 year development of the Code,

including taking steps to purchase new vehicles that are SRT compliant and to modify existing vehicles to make them SRT compliant.

If progress with developing the Code of Practice fails to meet agreed milestones or stalls, or if there is a sudden increase in the number of rollover crashes, then Government could immediately review its position and consider the mandatory introduction of measures to improve heavy vehicle stability (including SRT).

Comments

The forest industry in particular sees this approach as an opportunity to self manage heavy vehicle stability issues and operator and driver training. They support treating the Code of Practice in a similar way to the Forest Safety Code because the Forest Safety Code has to be met by all who work in the forest industry eg log carters, tree owners, tree fellers and saw and pulp mills.

The value and long-term benefit of a Code of Practice would be considerably strengthened if companies that engage transport contractors require those contractors to demonstrate compliance with the Code of Practice as part of any contract negotiations.

While the timeframe for developing the Code of Practice is 2 years, industry involvement in its development will encourage and lead to changes in practices being put in place well within that timeframe. In fact there is evidence of changes already being made as a consequence of industry considering the Ministerial Terms of Reference for HeTSAC, with some operators already seeking to purchase new vehicles that are SRT compliant.

This option is RECOMMENDED.