

Management commitment

What is it?

Management commitment to safety is the commitment from managers, particularly business owners and executive officers, to ensuring their employees and anyone impacted by their operations are not exposed to unacceptable safety risks.

Why is it important?

The importance of management commitment is reinforced in the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) which identifies the owner or executive officer as the accountable person for safety within a business.

Managers are responsible for making decisions and directing how a business undertakes its transport activities. It's the actions and behaviour of managers that influence the work environment and the way employees view and manage safety.

Also, business owners and executive officers have a legal responsibility to exercise due diligence to ensure the business complies with their safety obligations.

How can you demonstrate management commitment?

The most important aspect of commitment to safety is that it's reflected in the way managers direct and operate the business. It's also important for this commitment to be documented and visible to all employees and visitors. Having a safety policy and establishing objectives are examples of how this visibility can be achieved.

Safety policy

A safety policy documents what a business will do to manage safety or, to put it another way, how a business will approach safety in their operations. A policy can be as simple as a short statement about the importance of safety and what the business will do to manage it. What's critical is that the policy is actually reflected in business practices. A safety policy may:

- outline the business owner or executive officer's commitment to safety
- reflect the business's operating environment
- outline the business's approach to safety
- explain how safety and risks will be managed and by whom
- show how the business will continuously improve its safety performance.

Like any business policy, it's important that it's clear, easy to understand and available for viewing by everyone.



Safety objectives

Regardless of the size and complexity of your business, it's important to establish some safety objectives so that everyone has a clear understanding of what the SMS is working toward. You should also use your safety objectives to measure whether your SMS is working effectively.

When developing safety objectives, it can be helpful to apply the SMART principle. That is: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely. You may consider setting objectives around key CoR-related areas, such as mass, dimension, loading, speeding, roadworthiness and fatigue.

Some examples of safety objectives that use the SMART principle are:

- conducting weekly safety meetings with employees
- responding to all hazard reports within 24 hours
- reviewing all risks and risk controls at least every six months
- promoting reporting of maintenance issues to reduce vehicle downtime.

On the NHVR website there is a template for a safety policy. A worked example has been provided to assist you to develop content for your own business. Review the sample content provided and delete what is not required. Add your own content where relevant.

Safety responsibilities

What are they?

For an SMS to work effectively, everyone in the business needs to be involved. Responsibilities and roles in the SMS will be different depending on the work people do. It's important that everyone is clear about what's required of them and who holds key safety responsibilities.

Why is it important?

Ensuring employees clearly understand their role in the SMS and the behaviour expected of them will help activities to be carried out safely and efficiently, reducing confusion and unnecessary duplication of work.

How can you do it?

Identifying who will be responsible for performing different activities in the SMS is a good starting point for managing your responsibilities. It's important to ensure anyone who has a safety responsibility has appropriate training and is capable of completing the required tasks. For example, it may not be appropriate for someone to develop driver schedules if they don't have a good understanding of related fatigue management requirements or practices.

Engaging appropriate employees and documenting and communicating safety responsibilities are examples how you can manage your safety responsibilities.

Engage employees

When you are assigning safety roles and responsibilities, it's important to involve the employees who will be carrying out the activities. By involving employees you'll be able to identify whether the responsibility is appropriate for that person and role and whether any training is required.

Document and communicate

Safety responsibilities should be documented and communicated to all employees in a way that's clear, easy to understand and available to everyone.

Safety responsibilities should also be readily available so they can be referred to and kept up to date to avoid confusion. Safety responsibilities can be documented in any format that suits your business. For example:

- in a position/role description
- in policies and procedures
- on posters or notice boards or in driver handbooks.

Regardless of where roles and responsibilities are documented, the critical factor is that they're clearly communicated, understood and include reference to the party's responsibility for the transport activities relevant to the role.

On the NHVR website there is a template for safety responsibilities. A worked example has been provided to assist you to develop content for your own business. Review the sample content provided and delete what is not required. Add your own content where relevant.

