

Recommencement of rail operations for tourist & heritage operators after an extended shutdown

June, 2026

Overall Responsibilities

As part of your overall responsibilities, you must comply with all requirements of your safety management system (SMS) after an extended shutdown of operations.

Your SMS should appropriately identify, assess, control and monitor risks to rail safety associated with your railway operations.

Complying with your SMS and managing risks to rail safety, are requirements under the *Rail Safety National Law (RSNL)*.

This fact sheet highlights activities to undertake prior to recommencing operations after an extended shutdown.

Rolling Stock

Rolling stock activities prior to recommencing operations:

- > Conduct pre-start checks for rolling stock prior to the first run of operations.
- > Check compliance certificates for assets (e.g. boiler certificates) are up to date.
- > Conduct lubrication checks on all rolling elements, parts and components that rely on lubrication for their safe and reliable functioning.
- > Inspect axle bearings and engines for signs of lubricant leakage and oxidation/corrosion; and
- > Inspect engine pre-lubricating systems and conduct pre-lubricating checks as specified by original equipment manufacturers for internal combustion engines.

Rail Infrastructure

Rail infrastructure activities prior to recommencing operations:

- > Conduct pre-start checks for track and structures (including bridges).
- > Inspect rail and rail joint condition.

- > Assess condition of sleepers and fastening assemblies.
- > Assess ground condition for any movement, settlement or slips.
- > Inspect points operation i.e. inspect blade fit, operation and locking mechanisms.
- > Inspect all rolling stock/structure clearances including for vegetation growth and its effect on sighting distances.
- > Inspect active/passive level crossings and signage for damage and/or vandalism; and
- > Inspect/clean through crossing-work, v-crossing flangeways, level crossing flangeways (asphalt and especially gravel level crossings).

People

People activities prior to recommencing operations:

Health and Fitness

- > Check rail safety worker (RSW) medical assessments are up to date; and
- > Assess impact on workers regarding workload and breaks (e.g. increased cleaning or passenger management tasks).

Training and Instruction

- > Instruct workers that restarting operations after a long break is a time of increased risk; and
- > Conduct refresher briefings, demonstrations or reassessments for safety critical tasks and any changes to safety critical tasks e.g. affecting rolling stock, track, infrastructure or safe working rule changes.

This is critical for all RSWs, especially recently qualified RSWs who have not had enough practical experience since being assessed as competent.

Operations

- > Allocate RSWs to initial operations based on recency of experience where possible.
- > Recommence operations with the rolling stock and routes that are the most familiar and lowest risk, where possible.
- > Assess impacts of RSW or passenger physical distancing behaviour on rail safety risks e.g. emergency evacuation procedures.
- > Consider if RSW availability after an extended break may be impacted by their health status, age or family situation, as this may have flow on impacts for staffing, workload and fatigue; and
- > Ensure competencies for RSWs are up to date and only suitably qualified and competent staff undertake rail safety work.

Fatigue

- > Check whether changes to secondary/primary employment for RSWs or change to place of residence may impact fatigue following an extended shutdown of rail operations.

Additional Activities to Consider

Risk Assessments

Assess risks associated with recommencement of operations following an extended shutdown. Consider risks resulting from any new or altered tasks for RSWs and other staff and consult with those affected to help identify and manage those risks.

Technical Maintenance Plans (TMPs)

Undertake examinations, tests, activities specified in examination manuals and TMPs, daily running sheets and standard operating procedures.

Documentation

Document activities and inspections that have been undertaken or completed.

Next Steps

For further information or discussion regarding the information provided in this Fact Sheet, operators should contact their nominated ONRSR contact person in the first instance.

ONRSR Offices

If you have further issues that require clarification, please contact your local ONRSR Office:

ONRSR Adelaide Office (SA/NT/TAS)

> Ph: (08) 8406 1580

ONRSR Sydney Office (NSW)

> Ph: 1800 572 077

ONRSR Brisbane Office (QLD)

> Ph: 1800 531 982

ONRSR Melbourne Office (VIC)

> Ph: 1800 318 244

ONRSR Perth Office (WA)

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