



Office of Rail Safety

SAFETY ALERT

DATE of ISSUE: 10 January 2011	NOTICE No: RSN 2011 - 01
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SUBJECT	Braking Systems of Hi-rail Vehicles
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ADVICE TO:	All affected Rail Transport Operators
FROM:	Rob Burrows - Director Rail Safety

Background

An incident with potentially serious safety concerns occurred in WA following the runaway of a heavy duty rail mounted mobile flash welder truck. The investigation of the incident revealed that during the on-tracking process there was a period when the road wheels were above the road surface but not in contact with the rail wheels as they were being lowered, hence the transmission brake and road wheel brakes could not assist the rail wheel brakes in holding the vehicle on the prevailing gradient.

The controls for raising and lowering the rail wheels are situated outside the driver's cab to assist the operator observing that they are properly lowered on to the track. Inside the cab there are two switches in close proximity, one for engaging the park brake and the other for disengaging the rail wheel brake in the event that the truck needs to be towed on-rail.

The following actions need to be taken:

- Rail Transport Operators need to be aware of the potential for this situation to occur and conduct a risk assessment to assess whether their current process for on-and off-tracking rail mounted vehicles relies on only one braking mode during the process. Procedures should be developed that remove total reliance on only one braking system.
- RTO's should also ensure that the operators of hi-rail equipped vehicles are aware of the limiting gradients that should not be exceeded when choosing a site to on- or off-track them.
- RTO's should also check the placement and direction of activation of switches and warning lights in the vehicle cabs to improve cab ergonomics.

For further information, contact Chris Green on (08) 9216 8520