

Safety Management System Modules

Element 24 – Rail Safety Worker Competence

What and Why

Anyone who performs rail safety work must be competent to do so. Rail safety work is defined in section 8 of the RSNL.

It includes those who drive & shunt rolling stock, signal trains, guards, those who inspect and/or maintain rolling stock and railway infrastructure.

Note: Competency must be assessed in accordance with relevant qualifications or units of competence recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

It does not mean that assessments must be carried out by a Certificate IV Trainer Assessor so long as the competencies are not used in another organisation. It means that if the assessment is carried out by a competent person who is not part of a Registered Training Organisation, it means that the skills only apply internally. That is – they are not portable to another operator.

How

The SMS contains a procedure that includes:

- Evidence that the contents of the Australian Qualifications Framework has been reviewed to see if it is practicable to use this framework;
- Details of the skills and knowledge are required for each class of rail safety worker for them to safely perform the task at their organisation have been identified (See Example RSW Competence Spreadsheet);
- The competencies each class of rail safety worker at their organisation is required to hold before an individual is permitted to perform that work;
- A list (register) of rail safety workers detailing the rail safety work they perform and the competencies they hold (See example Competency Register);
- A reference to the training material or standard operating procedures which describe the correct way of performing various tasks and rail safety work;
- That there are two forms of assessment;
 - an On The Job practical assessment, and
 - an Off The Job written assessment.
- A statement that describes what skills and/or qualifications must be held by an assessor;
- How the performance of rail safety workers will be monitored (and any arrangements relating to periodic reassessment);
- Details of the types and form of training records that will be kept;
- How competency is linked to rail safety worker identification.

Things to consider:

- Competency assessment involves all forms of rail safety work, not just operations like driving and shunting. It includes performing inspection and maintenance work on the railway's infrastructure and rolling stock.
- Operators must also ensure that they have people with the relevant technical competence to:
 - Develop/change safety standards for rolling stock and infrastructure together with operating rules and systems;
 - Confirm engineering standards and inspection regimes for rolling stock and infrastructure are appropriate for the scope and nature of the operations; and
 - Certify the condition of the operator's rolling stock and infrastructure meets the standards the operator has set.
- Records of the training provided to each individual and the assessment of their competence and other relevant qualifications are retained.
- Each rail safety worker must also carry identification that can be used to confirm who the person is and to check their competencies with the operator.
- Records must have details of:
 - the rail safety training undertaken by each rail safety worker, including when the training was undertaken and its duration; and
 - the qualifications and competencies of each rail safety worker, including
 - the name of the organisation, or person, who conducted the training or re-training; and
 - the name and qualifications of the person who assessed the competence of the rail safety worker.

Rail safety workers must be trained to respond to normal, abnormal, degraded and emergency situations.

Who

Managers and supervisors must ensure that all rail safety workers are competent to perform their rostered type of rail safety work.

Rostering staff should ensure that rail safety workers are competent when rostered for specific tasks and that sufficient supervision is in place for less experienced /qualified persons.

The Executive Committee/Board may seek reports regarding rail safety worker competence to fulfil their governance obligations.

Assessors must understand the serious nature of competency assessment, and that they have a personal liability when they assess a rail safety worker as competent.

All organisations have an obligation under safety laws to provide training, instruction, supervision and tools to enable people to do work safely.

Rail safety workers have an obligation under safety laws to attend training, apply the knowledge, and to use tools for their intended purpose.

All rail safety workers are required to follow reasonable management instructions.

When

Operators are to determine when and how rail safety workers are to be trained and assessed.

The frequency of re-assessment of competence is often led by the Rail Infrastructure Manager of a shared network. Where this is not the case, the frequency is determined by the operator, and should take into account the risk associated with the task.

Operators may wish to develop mechanisms to reassess rail safety workers if they have been absent from the operators for a pre-determined period of time.

List of relevant documents (internal)

Element 7 - Document Control and Information Management

Element 10 – Safety Audit Arrangements

Element 15 – Training and Instruction

Element 16 – Risk Management

Element 19 - General Engineering and Operational Systems Safety

Element 20 – Process Control

Element 27 – Health and Fitness

Competency Register

RSW Role Competence

Links (external)

[ONRSR Website – Assessment of RSW competence Fact Sheet](#)

[ONRSR Website - Application of the QAF to rail safety worker Competence Assessment](#)

[ATHRA Website – Training Pathways](#)

Appendices

- A. [Example Competency Register](#)
- B. [Example Rail Safety Worker Competence](#)
- C. [Example Training Attendance Form](#)