

# Safety Management System Modules

## Element 27 – Health and Fitness

### What and Why

All operators must have a health and fitness program that fulfils the requirements of the National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers (the Standard) published by the National Transport Commission (NTC), which took effect on 11 November 2024.

This is to minimise the impact on safety on the rail network of the effects of the ill-health of rail safety workers. The Standard provides a number of key provisions to assist rail transport operators, rail safety workers and others with obligations under the Standard to comply. This includes the requirements to:

- > Determine the risk category of the rail safety workers;
- > Identify an Authorised Health Professional (AHP) to conduct health assessments for the operator;
- > Provide standard forms to be used by industry and their accredited health professionals;
- > Provide for Pre-employment, Periodic and Triggered Health Assessments;
- > Allow for the privacy of the rail safety workers.

The Standard provides for an AHP to determine one of the following when assessing the health and fitness of a rail safety worker. Full details of these are described in the Standard;

- > Fit for Duty Unconditional;
- > Fit for Duty Subject to Review;
- > Temporarily Unfit for Duty;
- > Permanently Unfit for Duty.

Where a rail safety worker is determined to be either Temporarily or Permanently Unfit for Duty – they **cannot perform ANY rail safety work in the category in which they were assessed**. They must be removed from rail safety work with immediate effect as soon as the determination is made and until a review is conducted and they are confirmed as Fit for Duty Unconditional or Fit for Duty Subject to Review.

Where the results of the health assessment indicate that the rail safety worker can continue to do some form of rail safety work, a risk assessment should be carried out to see what type of rail safety work the rail safety worker can still do. An example may be that the rail safety worker is unfit to be a Driver (Category 1) but is still able to work in the maintenance shed as a maintainer (Category 3 or 4) if they are competent to do so. Confirmation of their fitness for duty for an alternative role must be provided by an AHP.

Some larger operators will group health assessments, drug and alcohol management and fatigue management in one SMS document as the process for managing “Fitness for Duty”. These modules address each one separately for ease of understanding.

## How

Operators should first of all download the Standard and the health assessment forms from the NTC website (see links) and review them for understanding. The forms are available as fillable PDF documents.

The SMS should contain a procedure that provides details on how the health and fitness of rail safety workers is managed. The procedure does not need to include the content of the Standard, but should reference the Standard. The procedure should:

- > Include written confirmation of the rail safety worker roles within the organisation and the category that is applied to each of those roles. This may be in the form of a simple table;
- > Contain references to the risk assessment carried out to determine which categories rail safety workers fall into (see *Risk Categorisation and Health Assessment Requirements Template*);
- > Describe the process for approving AHPs used by the operator. This could be as simple as stating the operator selects the AHP from the AHP Program [website](#) and has a discussion to confirm that they will undertake health assessments for rail safety workers according to the Standard;
- > Confirm that rail safety workers are not able to commence any type of rail safety work unless they have been certified as Fit for Duty under the Standard for that type of work;
- > Explain the process for arranging and paying for health assessments;
- > Describe the process to issue the correct forms to the AHP and the rail safety worker, including steps to protect privacy;
- > Describe how the operator will manage Periodic Health Assessments, including adequate notice for the worker;
- > Describe how the operator will manage Triggered Health Assessments, including requirements for communicating with the worker;
- > Describe steps that are to be taken for each type of fitness for duty outcome received from the AHP;
- > Refer to the process and communication that will be applied where a rail safety worker is determined to be Unfit for Duty (temporarily or permanently) under the Standard;
- > Refer to a Health Assessment Register or Database where dates of assessments are recorded and updated, as well as health assessment outcomes. An example is included as Appendix A to this module;
- > Include details of how health assessment records are recorded and retained to meet operational and privacy requirements;
- > Include processes for ensuring that rail safety worker contractors are Fit for Duty in compliance with the Standard.

There are a number of steps that are required to be demonstrated by all operators. An operator must:

- > Assess the risk category of the rail safety worker and determine the health assessment requirements.
  - Section 2.3 and Figure 7 of the Standard provide guidance and a flowchart to assist in the assessment of the risks associated with the tasks carried out by the various types of rail safety worker.
  - Figure 8 describes the steps in determining the health assessment requirements;
- > Demonstrate that they use AHPs authorised to conduct health assessments for rail safety workers;
- > Arrange for Pre-employment Health Assessments to be carried out prior to engagement as a rail safety worker, as well as Periodic Health Assessments;
- > Demonstrate that they use the standard NTC forms appropriately.

## Who

- > All rail safety workers (including contractors) should understand their obligations and the need to be a holder of a current health assessment certificate and only perform rail safety work when deemed “Fit for Duty”;
- > Safety managers and administrative staff should make sure that health assessment records/registers/databases are kept up to date;
- > All persons should follow the procedures for organising, attending, managing and responding to health assessments as described in the Standard and the operator’s procedures.

## When

Under the Standard:

- > Category 1 and 2: Safety Critical Workers must have a Pre- employment (or change of risk category) Health Assessment, then
  - every 5 years to age 50, then
  - every 2 years to age 60, then
  - every year.

They must have a health assessment conducted within 2 years after turning 50 years of age, and within 1 year after turning 60 years of age.
- > Category 3: Around the Track Personnel in an Uncontrolled Environment must have a Pre- employment Health Assessment, then
  - every 5 years from the age of 40 years.
  - Category 3 workers who have had a full health assessment less than 5 years before turning 40 (e.g. for pre-employment) may have their next periodic assessments scheduled 5 years from that date.
- > Category 4: Around the Track Personnel in a Controlled Environment do not require a health assessment under the Standard.

## List of relevant documents (internal)

Element 20 – Process Control

Health and Fitness for Duty procedure

Health Assessment Register example

Controlled document procedure

## Links (external)

[NTC website - National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers](#)

NTC website - [Health Assessment forms](#)

[ONRSR Website – Health and Fitness](#)

[ONRSR Website – Guideline - Safety Management System](#)

[ONRSR Website – Rail Safety National Law](#)

[AHP Program website – Find an AHP near you](#)

## Appendices

A. [Example Health Assessment Register](#)