

# 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 Transport Commission's National Health Assessment Standard for rail safety workers.

This is to minimise the impact on safety on the rail network from the effects of the health or fitness of a rail safety worker. The National Standard (the Standard) provides a number of key provisions to assist members of the rail industry to comply. This includes the requirements to:

- Determine the risk category of the rail safety worker;
- Identify and 'accredit' a Health Professional to conduct health assessments for the operator;
- Provides standard forms to be used by industry and their accredited health professionals;
- Provides for pre-employment, periodic and triggered health assessments;
- Allows for the privacy of the rail safety worker.

The Standards provides for a Health Professional 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 Conditional;
- Fit for Duty Subject to Review;
- Fit for Duty Subject to Job Modification;
- 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 (any one of the four options).

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 but is still able to work as in the maintenance shed, as a maintainer (if they are competent to do so).

The Standard is administered by the National Transport Commission and is therefore outside the scope of ONRSR.

Some larger operators will group Health Assessments, Drug and Alcohol management and Fatigue management in one SMS document as process for managing "Fitness for Duty". These modules take a singular approach for ease of understanding.

### How

Operators should first of all download the National Standard and the health assessment forms from the NTC Website (see Links) and review it for understanding.

Word versions of the forms can be obtained by emailing [enquiries@ntc.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ntc.gov.au).

The SMS should contain a procedure that provides detail 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;
- Should include some written confirmation of the rail safety worker roles within the operations and the category that is applied to each of those roles. This may be in the form of a simple table;
- Contains references to the risk assessment carried out to determine which categories rail safety workers fall into;
- Should describe the process for approving the Health Professionals used by the operator. This could be as simple as stating that the operator selects the Health Professionals from the Rail Industry Worker website and has a verbal discussion to confirm that they will undertake health assessments for rail safety workers to the Standard;
- Confirms 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;
- Explains the process for arranging and paying for health assessments;
- Describes the process to issue the correct forms to the Health Professional and the rail safety worker;
- Describes how the operator will manage triggered or periodic health assessments;
- Should describe steps that are to be taken for each type of determination received from the health professional;
- Refer to the process and communication that will be applied where a rail safety worker is determined to be Unfit under the Standard;
- Should refer to a Health Assessment Register or Database where dates of assessments are recorded and updated. An example is included as Appendix A to this module;
- Includes details of how health assessment records are recorded and retained;
- 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.
  - Section 5.1 and Figure 6 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. An example could be that the level of risk for a person who works in a workshop is likely to be less than a mainline train driver.
  - Figure 9 describes the Risk Assessment Process to be carried out;
- Determine how they will accredit health professionals;
- Arrange for pre-employment health assessments to be carried out prior to engagement as a rail safety worker;
- Ensure that any person who is “Fit for Duty Conditional” understands and conforms to those conditions when carrying out rail safety work;
- Should describe how to use the standard NTC forms, and how, and to whom the forms are issued.

## Who

- All rail safety workers (including contractors) should understand their obligations and whether the need to be a holder of a current health assessment;

- Operations Managers & Supervisors should ensure that rail safety workers who require health assessments 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 follow the procedures for organising, attending, managing and responding to health assessments as described in the Standard and the operator’s procedures.

## When

- Category 1 and 2: Safety Critical Workers must have a pre- employment 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: Controlled Environment do not require a health assessment.

## List of relevant documents (internal)

Element 20 – Process Control

Health and Fitness for Duty procedure

Health Assessment Register

Health Assessment forms

Controlled document procedure

## Links (external)

[National Transport Commissions National Health Assessment Standard for rail safety workers](#)

[ONRSR Website – Health and Fitness](#)

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

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

[ONRSR – Guideline – Small isolated line heritage operations – Safety Management System \(SMS\)](#)

[Rail Industry Worker Website – Authorised Health Professionals](#)

## Appendices

### A. [Example Health Assessment Register](#)