COMPLYFLOW



CONTRACTOR COMPLIANCE GUIDES

Transport and Logistics: the contractor compliance guide.

What Australian law asks of fleets, 3PLs, and distribution centres when carriers and contractors work for you, and how to prove you met it.

Current to November 2026
The HVNL as amended from 1 August 2026; penalties for 1 August 2026 to 30 June 2027; model WHS laws as at 5 December 2025

Includes
A pre-start checklist, an authorisation record, and the carrier file

Covers
The six HVNL jurisdictions, with WA and NT; WHS in every state, Victoria named

START HERE

The short version.

If your business sends freight out or takes it in by heavy vehicle, it is in the Chain of Responsibility, whether anyone has told you or not. If it runs a depot or a distribution centre, the drivers, forklift operators, cleaners, security officers, and maintenance trades on site are part of its WHS duty too. Neither duty can be handed to a carrier or a contractor in a clause.

1 **A business is a party because of what it does, not what it is called.** The NHVR's rule of thumb: if your business sends or receives goods by heavy vehicle, it is in the chain.[5]

2 **Contracting the haulage out does not take you out of the chain.** The NHVR's advice of 22 September 2026 says a party remains one even when its transport activities are contracted or subcontracted,[7] and a duty under the HVNL cannot be transferred to another person, a carrier included (s 26B(4)).[2]

3 **Pressure on a driver now costs twice as much.** The base penalty for asking, or contracting, for something you know or ought reasonably to know would make a driver speed, drive while impaired by fatigue or unfit to drive, or drive a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle in breach of work and rest hours doubled, to AU$28,230 once indexed (1 August 2026 to 30 June 2027).[2, 9]

4 **Contractors on your site are workers, for WHS purposes.** Under the model WHS Act, a person who carries out work for a business as a contractor or subcontractor, or as a contractor's employee, is a worker of that business;[19] Victoria gets there by its own route (page 11).

5 **Let in is not the same as authorised.** Signing a trade in at the gate does not authorise them to work on a dock leveller, a racking upright, or a cold room. A risk assessment, any permit and isolation, and a handback come between the two (page 17).

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01 THE PRACTICAL TEST

The practical test is what you can show.

Most businesses in the chain do more than they can show. The careful dock supervisor, the carrier who has never missed a rest break, the contract that was read before it was signed: all of it is hard to show if nobody can find the evidence when it is asked for. The NHVR's guidance says a business could be charged "even if no incident has actually occurred",[4] so it pays to have the record ready before anything goes wrong, not assembled afterwards.

An approved carrier is not a checked driver.

Checking a carrier at tender says little about the driver and the vehicle that arrive at 2am, or about the subcontractor the run was passed to. The same is true on the dock: a contractor company approved last year says little about whether the forklift operator it sends tonight holds the licence, and before anyone does high risk work that needs a licence, the business directing or allowing it must see written evidence of that licence (r 85).[20]

ASSESSED BEFORE ENGAGEMENT; REVIEWED WHEN SOMETHING CHANGES

The carrier or contractor

- ✓ How it operates, found out before the first job: accreditation where held, insurance, and how it manages fatigue[6]
- ✓ Workers compensation and insurance current: scope and status checked, not only expiry
- ✓ The contract: subcontracting, safety information, who checks what, and who keeps the record

CHECKED AT EVERY GATE, ON THE DAY

The driver, the vehicle, and the worker

DC, western Sydney | DC, Brisbane | Depot, Melbourne

- ✓ The driver and the vehicle that actually arrived, not the ones named at tender, and any subcontractor the run was passed to
- ✓ Any high risk work licence, such as a forklift licence, sighted before the work[20]
- ✓ Inducted to this site, signed in, authorised for the task, and supervised to match the work

Where it usually breaks.

Records in pieces.
Insurance in procurement's inbox, the fatigue plan on a shared drive, the dock sign-in on paper. Together they answer nothing quickly.

Verification by hand.
Someone types each expiry date into a spreadsheet, until they go on leave.

Systems that do not talk.
Booking knows the carrier, the contract file the terms, the gate the driver. None knows what the others know.

No view across sites.
Each DC keeps its own list, so nobody can say which carriers and trades are current across the business.

Two laws, one verification step. Executive due diligence under the HVNL includes reasonable steps to verify that the business's safety resources and processes are being provided, used, and implemented (s 26D(3)(e)).[2] An officer's due diligence under the model WHS Act includes reasonable steps to verify the provision and use of its health and safety resources and processes (s 27(5)(f)).[19] Each gap above makes both harder to show.



02 THE BASICS

Responsibility follows the function, not the job title.

Chain of Responsibility is the part of the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) that makes parties other than drivers responsible for the safety of heavy vehicles on the road.[1] The law puts it as a principle: the safety of transport activities relating to a heavy vehicle is the shared responsibility of each party in the chain.[2]

A heavy vehicle, for these purposes, is one with a gross vehicle mass or aggregate trailer mass over 4.5 tonnes, or a combination that includes one.[2] A crash caused by a fatigued driver often starts somewhere else: a window nobody could meet legally, a late load, a contract that paid by the drop. Since October 2018 the law has worked on a positive duty that each business carries for itself.[4]

Three details that catch compliance and procurement teams out.

The contract wording does not decide it.

The NHVR says you are a party "because of a function you perform, not because of a title or job description, or the words of a contract."[5]

A busy dock makes you a loading manager.

The law counts whoever manages or runs premises that load or unload an average of at least 5 heavy vehicles each operating day (over the last 12 months, or since opening if newer), and anyone they assign to supervise, manage, or control the loaders or unloaders there. For the fatigue rules, count fatigue-regulated vehicles only.[2]

The driver is not a party for driving.

Driving is not one of the functions, though drivers carry obligations of their own. An owner-driver is a party, as the operator of their own vehicle.[5]

02 THE BASICS

The 10 functions that make a business a party.

A business is a party when it performs any one of these.[5]

01
Employer
Employs a driver of a heavy vehicle.

02
Prime contractor
Engages a self-employed driver.

03
Operator
Operates the vehicle.

04
Scheduler
Schedules the goods or the drivers.

05
Consignor
Consigns the goods.

06
Consignee
Receives the goods.

07
Packer
Packs the goods.

08
Loading manager
Manages premises loading or unloading an average of 5 or more heavy vehicles each operating day.

09
Loader
Loads the goods.

10
Unloader
Unloads the goods.



The same dock answers to a second law.

A business that runs a loading dock is, to the extent it manages or controls that workplace, also a business with management or control of a workplace under WHS law (model Act, section 20(1)). Under the model WHS Act, that business must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace, the means of entering and exiting it, and anything arising from it are without risks to the health and safety of any person (section 20(2)).[19] On a dock, "any person" includes the carrier's driver, the labour-hire forklift operator, and the contract cleaner.

03 THE PRIMARY DUTY

One duty, whatever you do in the chain.

However many functions a business performs, the NHVR says it has one Primary Duty.[5] Section 26C of the HVNL says each party "must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of the party's transport activities relating to the vehicle."[2]

That means eliminating public risks, and where that is not reasonably practicable, minimising them. It also means, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensuring the business's conduct does not directly or indirectly cause or encourage a driver, or another party, to break the law.[2]

"Reasonably practicable" means what could reasonably be done at the time, weighing up all relevant matters, the last of which is whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the likelihood of the risk or damage.[2] Where more than one party has the duty, each discharges it to the extent it can influence and control the matter, or would have been able to but for an agreement that limits that capacity.[2]

> **"A duty under this Law may not be transferred to another person."**
>
> Heavy Vehicle National Law, section 26B(4)[2]

Why this is a procurement matter.

The contract is conduct. Entering into a contract counts as conduct under the duty, so the terms you set are part of what you are judged on.[2]

The carrier does not take your duty. A contract can set safety expectations, give you access to a carrier's safety information, and set up monitoring and reporting, but the duty stays with you.[2, 6]

Shared is not equal. The NHVR's advice of 22 September 2026 says parties "remain a CoR party even when their transport activities are contracted, or subcontracted, to another party." Shared responsibility "does not mean equal responsibility": it follows influence and control, and parties are accountable for "the constraints they impose" on others.[7]

Nothing has to go wrong. The NHVR's guidance says a business could be charged "even if no incident has actually occurred."[4]

Where the constraint is set.

Customer contract	Booking window	Loading time	Carrier agreement	Driver's shift
Receiving windows, late fees	When the truck must arrive	When the load is ready	Rates, terms, subcontracting	Hours, rest, the run itself
Consignee, procurement	**Consignor, scheduler**	**Loading manager, loader**	**Procurement, consignor**	**Operator, employer**

Each box is a point where a constraint is set long before the truck leaves. Responsibility follows influence and control,[7] so the business that sets the constraint answers for it.

What we recommend: treat every carrier contract and every booking rule as a safety document, and keep the reasoning behind it. The questions that matter are what you knew, what you could influence, and what you did about it.

04 THE 2026 CHANGES

What changed on 1 August 2026.

The amended HVNL commenced on 1 August 2026, after the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Act 2025 passed the Queensland Parliament on 18 November 2025.[8] The Primary Duty itself is word for word the same.

S 26E Prohibited requests and contracts were widened, and the penalty doubled.

It is an offence to ask, direct, or require a driver or another party to do something the person "knows, or ought reasonably to know" would cause the driver to speed, drive a heavy vehicle while impaired by fatigue or unfit to drive, drive a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle in breach of work and rest hours, or drive in breach of another law to avoid driving while impaired by fatigue, unfit to drive, or in breach of work and rest hours. It is equally an offence to enter into a contract the person knows, or ought reasonably to know, would cause, or encourage, any of them. The fatigue limb now covers any heavy vehicle, and driving while unfit is new.[2]

BEFORE 1 AUGUST 2026

AU$10,000 base penalty
AU$14,120 indexed, 1 to 31 July 2026[2, 10]

→

FROM 1 AUGUST 2026

AU$20,000 base penalty
AU$28,230 indexed, 1 August 2026 to 30 June 2027[2, 9]

S 26D(1A) The executive duty has its own subsection.

It applies to the Primary Duty, with its penalty tied to the three breach categories.[2]

S 457A Safety management systems are now defined in the law.

An audit of one by an approved auditor is admissible in a Primary Duty prosecution (s 632B).[2]

S 705 Codes of practice are now issued by the NHVR.

They replace registered industry codes, and a court may rely on them to decide what was reasonably practicable (s 632A).[2]

HVA Accreditation changed.

The Heavy Vehicle Accreditation scheme replaced the old national scheme, with General Safety Accreditation and Alternative Compliance Accreditation levels.[11] An accreditation in force before 1 August 2026 keeps running under the old law until it expires or is cancelled.[2]

The operational rules changed as well. The NHVR lists updates to fatigue requirements, simplified work diary record-keeping, and changes to mass, dimension, and loading provisions.[3] This guide is about the duty; for the detailed rules that apply to a fleet, go to the NHVR's reform pages.

FOR PROCUREMENT

Section 26E reaches the buyer's side of the contract.

It applies to any person who asks for or contracts for these things, and that includes the pressure a customer or a shipper applies: the window that cannot be met without breaking the rules, the late fee that makes a driver choose between the fine and the rest break. If your business writes those terms, this is the change to act on first.



05 EXECUTIVES AND OFFICERS

Due diligence is personal.

If the business is a party, its executives carry a separate duty to exercise due diligence to make sure it complies.[2] For a company, that means an executive officer; for a partnership, a partner; for an unincorporated body, a management member. An executive can be convicted even if the business itself has not been prosecuted.[2]

This may include you. The HVNL defines an executive officer of a corporation as a director or "any person, by whatever name called and whether or not the person is a director of the corporation, who is concerned or takes part in the management of the corporation."[2] The NHVR's own page puts it more broadly still: the term "includes an executive officer, a manager or another person who takes part in the management of a business."[12] Whether a person is caught turns on that definition and their actual role; asking every manager to show the checks is sound company policy, not the legal test.

The same idea under WHS law.

Under the model WHS Act, an officer of a business "must exercise due diligence to ensure that the person conducting the business or undertaking complies with that duty or obligation" (section 27(1)).[19] Safe Work Australia describes an officer as someone who "makes, or participates in making, significant decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the business": a narrower group than the HVNL's, decided by the role, not the job title.[21]

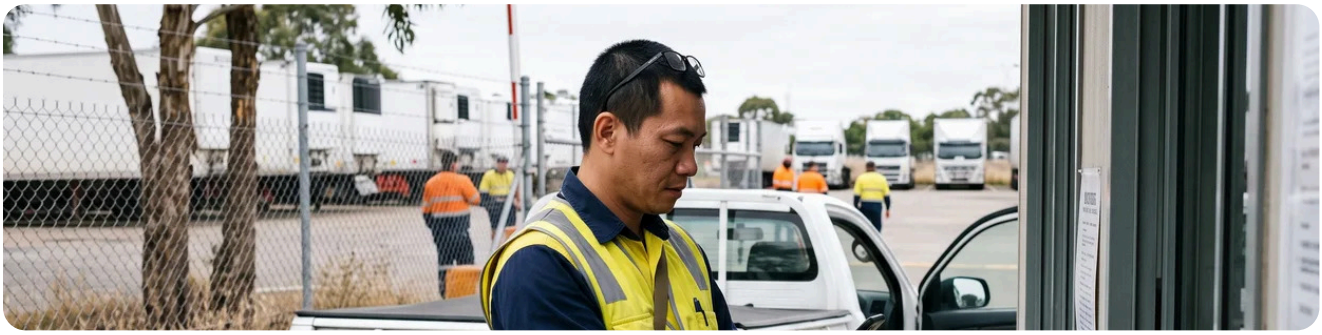
Victoria.

The WHS part of this chapter describes the model WHS Act. Victoria's OHS Act 2004 has its own provisions on officers; check them before relying on it for a Victorian entity.

05 EXECUTIVES AND OFFICERS

What due diligence involves.

The HVNL spells it out: taking reasonable steps to keep up to date with safe transport practice, understanding the business's own transport activities and their risks, making sure it has and uses the right resources and processes, and verifying that those resources and processes are actually being provided, used, and implemented.[2] That last step is the one a board paper cannot satisfy on its own. An executive who fails in the duty can face the same penalty as an individual who breached the Primary Duty.[4] The model WHS Act's list for officers ends the same way, with verifying that the resources and processes are provided and used (section 27(5)(f)).[19]



The maximum HVNL penalties, 1 August 2026 to 30 June 2027.

The HVNL sets each maximum penalty in dollars and indexes it every 1 July; the NHVR publishes the indexed figures.[2, 9]

Offence	Individual	Company
Category 1, reckless conduct exposing someone to risk of death or serious injury or illness (s 26F)	**AU$436,850 or 5 years' imprisonment, or both**	**AU$4,230,550**
Category 2, a breach that exposes someone to that risk (s 26G)	**AU$212,090**	**AU$2,120,880**
Category 3, a breach of the Primary Duty (s 26H)	**AU$70,580**	**AU$705,820**
Prohibited requests and contracts (s 26E)	**AU$28,230**	**Up to AU$141,150, five times the individual maximum (s 596)**

The figures in the law itself are the base amounts: AU$300,000 and five years, AU$3,000,000 for a company, and so on down.[2] Those are the numbers most guides still quote, without a date. Where an offence sets no separate figure for a company, as the prohibited requests offence does not, a court may fine a body corporate up to five times the individual maximum.[2] Court is not the only outcome: the NHVR says sanctions range "from education and improvement notices to prosecution."[7] None of the three Primary Duty categories can be dealt with by an infringement notice; they go to court.[9] Since 1 August 2026, if a Category 1 charge is not proven, the court can find the person guilty of a Category 2 or 3 offence instead.[2]

What we recommend: give every executive a short, regular verification report: carriers and contractors checked and due, documents about to lapse, each incident of pressure on a driver and each incident on site, and what changed because of it. It supports the verification step under both laws, on one page, with a date on it.



06 WHERE THE LAW APPLIES

Six jurisdictions share one law. Two do not.

The HVNL commenced on 10 February 2014 in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria.[3] Each has its own law adopting it, with some local variations.

It has not commenced in Western Australia or the Northern Territory, but it applies to vehicles from those jurisdictions once they cross into one where it does, and some rules, such as work diary requirements, can apply before the border.[3] The WHS map is different again: Western Australia has adopted the model WHS laws, and Safe Work Australia says "Victoria is the only jurisdiction who has not implemented the model WHS laws."[30]

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>ACT</th><th>NSW</th><th>Qld</th><th>SA</th><th>Tas</th><th>Vic</th><th>WA</th><th>NT</th></tr>
<tr><td>Chain of Responsibility
sources 3, 13, 40</td><td colspan="5">The HVNL, adopted by each; the text is the schedule to a Queensland Act. The NHVR administers it, with local variations; police enforce it too</td><td>Its own CoR laws; Main Roads WA</td><td>HVNL not commenced</td></tr>
<tr><td>WHS
source 30</td><td colspan="5">The model WHS laws, in each jurisdiction's own version</td><td>OHS Act 2004 (Vic)</td><td>The model WHS laws, in WA's own version (2020 Act)</td><td>The model WHS laws, in the NT's own version</td></tr>
</table>

Western Australia's Chain of Responsibility laws are in the Road Traffic (Administration) Act 2008 and the Road Traffic (Vehicles) Act 2012. In the Northern Territory, check the Territory's own road transport rules.[3, 13]

Western Australia brought in Chain of Responsibility in 2015, and Main Roads WA publishes yearly prosecution outcomes on its Chain of Responsibility page.[13] A business that runs freight into Perth should read the WA rules on their own terms rather than assume the HVNL applies.

06 WHERE THE LAW APPLIES

The WHS map, for the depot and the dock.

Where	The law	What it means for a depot or a DC
Victoria	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic).[24] An employer's duties extend to independent contractors it engages, and their employees, "in relation to matters over which the employer has control or would have control if not for any agreement purporting to limit or remove that control" (s 21(3)(b)), and it must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that people other than its employees are not exposed to risks from its undertaking (s 23).[24] Whoever has, to any extent, the management or control of a workplace must ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that the workplace and the means of entering and leaving it are safe and without risks to health, for the matters it manages or controls (s 26).[24]	WorkSafe Victoria says the person who manages or controls a workplace can include an employer, the building or site owner, and the property management or tenant.[25] Hold a Victorian depot to the same discipline as the rest of the network, checked against Victoria's own Act and Regulations.
Every other state and territory	Each jurisdiction's own version of the model WHS Act and Regulations; Western Australia's Work Health and Safety Act 2020 received assent on 10 November 2020.[26, 30]	Each jurisdiction enacts its own version, and the differences go beyond numbering. Check the local law, not only its numbering.[30]



Chain of Responsibility sits beside your WHS duties.

The NHVR's advice on how the two fit together (13 January 2026) notes that many CoR parties are also duty holders under WHS laws, and names people struck by forklifts as a WHS hazard of loading; the depot itself answers to its own state's law.[18] It says the standard in both is the same, to do what is reasonably practicable; the WHS duty covers contractors as well as workers, and a CoR party remains one when its transport is contracted out.[18] So the contractors and carriers on your site and on your contracts are part of what you manage, and the record is how you show it.

When the two laws pull apart. Where both deal with the same thing and both can be met, a person must comply with both; to the extent that is not possible, the HVNL says the WHS law prevails, and complying with the HVNL is not, in itself, evidence of complying with WHS law (s 18).[2]



07 THE DEPOT AND THE DOCK

Every trade on the dock is part of your WHS duty.

A distribution centre or depot runs on other businesses: the carriers' drivers at the dock, labour-hire forklift operators, the cleaning and security contractors, and the trades who service the forklifts, dock levellers, roller doors, racking, and cold rooms. Under the model WHS Act, each contractor who carries out work for your business is one of your workers (section 7(1)).[19]

Engaged or directed is enough.

The business must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers it engages or causes to be engaged, and of workers whose activities it influences or directs, and that other people are not put at risk from its work (section 19(1) and (2)).[19]

A forklift is licensed work.

Operating a forklift truck (not a pedestrian-operated or pallet truck) is high risk work that needs a licence for its class, the forklift or the order-picking class, and the business directing or allowing the work must see written evidence of it before the work starts (r 81, r 85, Schedule 3).[20]

Traffic is the risk to plan for.

The business with management or control of powered mobile plant, a forklift included, must manage the risk of it colliding with any person or thing (r 214), and ensure it does not collide with pedestrians or other powered mobile plant (r 215(4)).[20] Safe Work Australia publishes a general guide to workplace traffic management.[27]

07 THE DEPOT AND THE DOCK

Who comes to a depot, and what to hold for each.

Who	What to check before the work	Status and source
Carriers' drivers	Inducted to the site's traffic rules: where to park and wait, where to stand while the truck is loaded, and the forklift exclusion zones. Signed in and out. The truck leaves only on a named person's release (page 16).	LAW others not put at risk, so far as is reasonably practicable, s 19(2); the dock without risks, page 5 [19] GOOD PRACTICE the rules, the sign-in, and the release to depart
Forklift operators, labour hire included	The high risk work licence for the class of forklift, sighted before the work, and a record of it kept for at least 1 year after the work; familiarisation with this site's forklifts and routes.	LAW r 85(1) and (4) [20] GOOD PRACTICE site familiarisation
Forklift, dock, and door technicians	Every energy source isolated (electrical, hydraulic, pneumatic, gravity, stored) and tested, and restart controlled, while the plant is worked on. In NSW, an electrical licence or certificate for any electrical wiring work.	LAW plant risks managed and maintenance by a competent person, rr 203, 213 [20] LAW NSW electrical licences [29] GOOD PRACTICE your lock-out procedure
Refrigeration mechanics	For cold rooms and refrigerated trailers, a Refrigerant Handling Licence for anything done with a regulated refrigerant that could cause leakage, including installing, servicing, or decommissioning the equipment.	LAW national Refrigerant Handling Licence [28]
Racking installers and inspectors	Damage reported and graded: a seriously damaged bay unloaded at once and a hazardous one not reloaded, until repaired with the manufacturer's parts or parts an engineering report confirms; a competent person's formal inspection at least every 12 months, findings kept.	LAW the workplace without risks, page 5 [19] REGULATOR SafeWork NSW, pallet racking [37]
Cleaners and security officers	Inducted to traffic routes and pedestrian zones; work zoned away from forklifts; a lone worker at night on a monitored check-in, a missed one escalated; any licence the work needs, sighted.	LAW effective communication for remote or isolated work, r 48; [20] any licence the state requires GOOD PRACTICE the induction and zoning

Rule numbers (r) are from the model WHS laws; in Victoria, its own OHS Act and Regulations apply (page 11).

Labour hire is still your worker. Both businesses hold duties to a labour-hire forklift operator: agree in writing who checks, inducts, and supervises. [19]

08 FOR PROCUREMENT

What a contract can do, and what it cannot.

A carrier agreement is where a buyer has the most influence over a transport task it never sees. Before you sign, the NHVR says "you need to find out about how another business operates before you enter into a contract with them."[6]

A CONTRACT CAN

- Set expectations about safety practices.[6]
- Give you access to the carrier's safety performance information.[6]
- Establish ways for monitoring, reporting, and continuous improvement.[6]

A CONTRACT CANNOT

- Transfer your duty to the carrier. "A duty under this Law may not be transferred to another person."[2]
- Take you out of the chain because the work is subcontracted.[7]
- Be entered into lawfully if you know, or ought reasonably to know, it would cause, or encourage, a driver to speed, drive while impaired by fatigue or unfit to drive, or drive a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle in breach of work and rest hours (page 7).[2]

The NHVR's Primary Duty page says you must not take actions that could influence drivers and others to speed or breach the HVNL, and lists "direct requests or terms in a contract", "financial penalties or rewards" and "preferential treatment".[17] The law itself puts it as a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that your conduct does not directly or indirectly cause or encourage a breach (s 26C(2)(b)).[2] That list reaches beyond the contract itself, so check whether a rate that pays by the drop, a scorecard that rewards on-time arrival and nothing else, or a preferred-carrier list that favours whoever never misses a slot could influence a driver to speed or skip a rest.

Questions to put to every agreement, at each renewal and tender.

Term	The question to ask
Delivery windows and late fees	Does a fee still apply when the delay was caused at our dock or the customer's? Can the window move without penalising a safe late arrival?
Rates and incentives	Does anything in the rate, bonus, or scorecard reward speed over safe hours?
Safety information	Do we have a right to see the carrier's fatigue, maintenance, and incident records, and do we use it?
Subcontracting	May the carrier pass the run on, and if it does, who checks the next carrier and driver?
Documents and expiry	Which documents must stay current for the life of the contract, and who is told when one lapses?
Driver fitness	Can a driver report being unfit, or refuse a booking, without penalty?
Work on our sites	For cleaning, security, labour hire, or maintenance: who checks licences, who authorises the work, and who reports an incident?
Review	When was this agreement last read against the 1 August 2026 changes?

09 THE EVIDENCE

What records show you managed the risks.

The NHVR sets out six steps for meeting the Primary Duty.[14]

1. Know your transport activities
2. Identify the risks
3. Assess them
4. Decide how to control them
5. Put the controls in place
6. Monitor and update them

It names the main risks as fatigue, speeding, excessive mass or dimension, poorly restrained loads, and unsafe vehicles.[14] The controls it lists include training or recruitment, procedures, forms and documentation, equipment, technology, monitoring, auditing, and "agreements or amended agreements".[14]

Your function	What you control	What shows you controlled it
Consignor or consignee	Delivery windows, booking terms, what you ask of carriers	Contract terms, booking records, how delays were handled
Loading manager, loader, or packer	Mass, axle loads, dimension, restraint, and loading time	Accurate weights and dimensions given to the carrier, restraint checks against the loading performance standards, any container weight declaration, who released the load[35, 36]
Scheduler	Driver hours and timetables	Schedules against each driver's hours option, standard hours or an accreditation, reviewed regularly; the driver's work diary compliance checked (s 315)[2]
Operator or employer	Vehicles, drivers, and carriers engaged	Maintenance and pre-start records, licences, the carrier file
Site manager, for WHS	Contractors on site, forklifts, traffic, and the dock	Licences sighted, inductions, each job's authorisation, the traffic rules, incident records
Executive	Resources and processes	Evidence the processes are used and checked, not only written

Safety management systems and codes.

A safety management system is not a legal requirement for most heavy vehicle businesses, but the NHVR calls it one of the best ways to manage the risks and demonstrate compliance with the Primary Duty.[11] Operators accredited under the new scheme must have one. The NHVR's 2026 Master Code, reorganised around 45 transport activities, carries no offence for skipping a control, and the NHVR says a court may use it as evidence of what was reasonably practicable.[16]

Audit and training.

Auditing is one of the control measures the NHVR lists.[14] Since 1 August 2026, an audit of an operator's safety management system by an approved auditor, carried out under the audit standard, is admissible in a Primary Duty prosecution (s 632B).[2] Training is a listed control too, and the NHVR publishes advice on managing the risks of undertrained workers.[15] Part of an executive's due diligence is taking reasonable steps to acquire, and keep up to date, knowledge about the safe conduct of transport activities (s 26D(3)(a)).[2]

Audit frequency. The NHVR material we read sets none for a business outside accreditation. Set it by risk, and after any change to your customers' delivery terms.

09 THE EVIDENCE

The load, the hours, and the release.

Fatigue and certificates get most of the attention. The load, and the moment the truck leaves the dock, need the same evidence.

Release to depart.

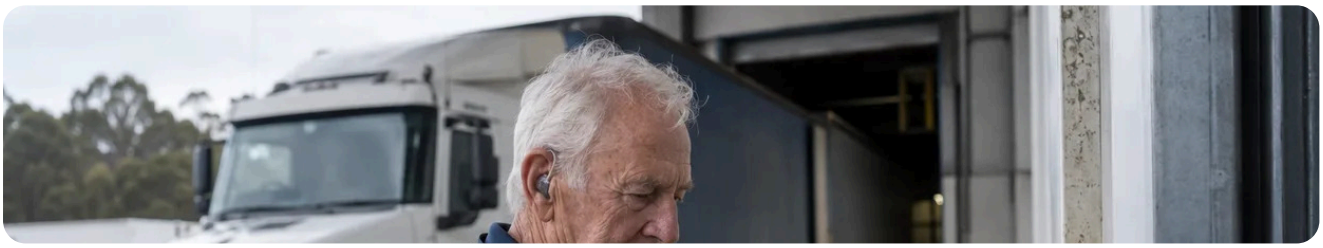
1 Loaded.
Loading finished, and accurate weights and dimensions given to the carrier.

2 Restrained.
Restraint checked against the loading performance standards; axle loads within limits.

3 Clear.
People clear; wheels chocked or the vehicle restrained; the dock edge guarded; the leveller rated for the load.

4 Released.
One named person tells the driver the truck may go.

LAW loads within the loading and mass requirements, HVNL ss 111 and 96 (standards in the MDL Regulation, Schedule 7); load documents not false or misleading, so far as is reasonably practicable, s 186(2) for the consignor and s 186(5);[2, 36] the dock without risks, so far as is reasonably practicable, page 5[19] REGULATOR keep the NHVR's Load Restraint Guide 2025 to hand[36] GOOD PRACTICE the release step and who gives it



Which vehicles the hours rules reach.

The work and rest hours and work diary rules apply to fatigue-regulated heavy vehicles: over 12 tonnes GVM, a combination over 12 tonnes, or a bus over 4.5 tonnes built or fitted to carry more than 12 adults, including the driver (s 7).[2, 33] The Primary Duty, and the ban on pressure to speed or drive impaired by fatigue or unfit, reach every heavy vehicle (pages 6 and 7).

Container weight declarations.

A consigned freight container going by road on a heavy vehicle needs a complying container weight declaration.[35] If your business consigned it, you must make sure it does not travel without one and, so far as is reasonably practicable, that it is not false or misleading (ss 187, 190);[2] otherwise, the NHVR advises obtaining it from the responsible entity or consignor.[36]

Fatigue records. For a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle, the driver's record keeper (the employer, a self-employed driver, or the operator where the driver works under its fatigue accreditation, s 317) keeps the work and rest records, local-area work included, for 3 years where an authorised officer can reach them (s 341).[2, 33] A DC or a consignee is not the record keeper for a carrier's driver: ask for assurance, not the diaries. If you schedule the goods or the driver, you must also make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the driver complies with the work diary rules (s 315).[2]

If the load is dangerous goods. Dangerous goods transport law sits beside the HVNL: each state and territory's law gives the Australian Dangerous Goods Code legal force, with its own duties and licences.[41] In NSW, for example, the driver and the vehicle each need a dangerous goods licence for a receptacle with a capacity over 500 litres, or one holding more than 500 kilograms, with an exception for some IBC loads (NSW EPA, updated 1 July 2026).[38] Check what applies to the load before it is booked.

10 AUTHORISING AND CONTROLLING THE WORK

Let in is not the same as authorised.

Signing in at the gate lets a contractor onto the site. It does not authorise work on a dock leveller, a racking bay, or a cold room: that takes a second step, and a handback after.

Control	What it means at a depot or a DC	Status and source
Task risk assessment	The job, the area, and the forklift and truck traffic, drivers, and other workers nearby assessed before work starts, and the controls agreed, not left to the trade on arrival.	LAW eliminate or minimise risks so far as is reasonably practicable (model Act ss 17 and 19; Regulations Part 3.1 where a regulation applies it) [19, 20] GOOD PRACTICE the written assessment
Traffic kept apart	Forklifts and trucks kept out of the work area, or the work zoned and timed around them, with the exclusion zone marked and someone named to hold it.	LAW collision risk managed, r 214 [20] GOOD PRACTICE the zone and who holds it
Confined spaces	An enclosed or partially enclosed space, not designed or intended mainly for people, at normal atmospheric pressure, with an atmosphere, contaminant, or engulfment risk (r 5): a tank or pit only if those apply. A written entry permit before any worker is sent in to work (r 67), with the controls in the note below.	LAW confined space risks managed, the entry permit, and the controls, rr 66, 67, 69 to 71, 74 [20]
Permits and isolations	Hot work, work at height on racking or the roof, and isolating a forklift, a dock leveller, a roller door, a battery charger, or a fire system, each run as a site permit with a named person who issues and closes it.	LAW plant risks managed, r 203 [20] GOOD PRACTICE the permit form
Construction work	Racking alterations, roof work, or a refrigeration install can be construction work; minor maintenance is not (r 289). High risk construction work, such as a fall over 2 metres, work near refrigerant lines or live electrical installations, or where forklifts move (r 291), needs a safe work method statement first, and stops if it departs from it. Every worker has general construction induction training and, if it was done more than 2 years ago, construction work in the last 2 years. A construction project, construction work costing at least an amount each state or territory sets, has a principal contractor (page 18).	LAW a safe work method statement for high risk construction work, followed, rr 299, 300; induction training, r 317; meanings, rr 289, 291, 293 [20]
Heights	Roof and racking access controlled, and any fall that is reasonably likely to cause injury managed, whatever the height.	LAW r 78 [20] GOOD PRACTICE the access permit
Fire system isolation	Approved in advance, kept short, logged, and confirmed back on before the trade leaves.	LAW an emergency plan for the workplace, r 43 [20] GOOD PRACTICE the isolation steps
Work-area protection and supervision	Barriers and signs; drivers and other workers kept clear; tools and materials secured; exits and fire doors kept free; and supervision matched to the work.	LAW s 19(2) and s 19(3)(f), so far as is reasonably practicable [19]
Handback	The plant tested and returned to service, guards back on, the area cleared, services and any fire system reinstated, and the permit closed, before the area goes back into use.	LAW the workplace without risks, page 5; plant left safe, so far as is reasonably practicable, r 207 [19, 20] GOOD PRACTICE the signed handback

The permit does not replace the controls. For a confined space: a written risk assessment by a competent person, asking first whether the work can be done without entering; for any entry, connected plant and services isolated so far as is reasonably practicable, the atmosphere controlled, a standby in contact, and practised rescue (rr 66, 69 to 71, 74). [20]

10 AUTHORISING AND CONTROLLING THE WORK

What one authorisation records.

	Field	Filled in by
☐	The job, the area or dock, the date and hours, and the contractor and each worker	Requester
☐	Licences and induction checked for each worker, for this site (page 21)	Contractor coordinator
☐	The risk assessment, and any permit or isolation, by number	Contractor and permit issuer
☐	Construction work or not; if high risk construction work, the safe work method statement and each worker's construction induction card	Contractor coordinator
☐	Construction project or not; if it is, the principal contractor named	Site manager
☐	The traffic plan for the job: the zone, the time, and who holds it	Shift or dock manager
☐	Any fire isolation: approved by, time out, time reinstated and tested	Fire services contractor and site manager
☐	The shift, the dock, and other contractors affected: who was told, and what they agreed	Shift or dock manager
☐	Handback: plant tested, guards on, area cleared, signed off, permit closed	Site manager

One job, four stages, controlled throughout.

1 Requested.
The job, the area, the contractor, and the traffic nearby.

2 Assessed.
Risks, traffic, permits, isolations, and any licence needed.

3 Authorised.
By whoever controls the area; the shift and the dock told.

4 Handed back.
Checked, tested, cleared, signed off, record closed.

Controlled throughout A named person is responsible for the work while it runs, and checks it against what was authorised.



Who is the principal contractor. Under the model WHS laws, the business that commissions a construction project is its principal contractor unless it appoints and authorises another (r 293); Victoria's rules differ (page 11).[20]

Anyone can stop the work. Make it a contract term and a line in the induction: a shift manager, a gatehouse officer, a forklift operator, or the contractor's own worker who sees work running outside what was authorised can stop it, and the person who authorised it decides what happens next. **When the job changes,** assess and re-authorise it: a forklift service that becomes a mast repair changes the traffic plan as well as the job.

11 A WORKED EXAMPLE

One night at a distribution centre in western Sydney.

An average of 40 heavy vehicles each operating day load at a third-party logistics business's distribution centre, so it is a loading manager; it engages the carriers that move its customers' goods, so it is a consignor too. Its main retail customer runs a regional distribution centre in Canberra with two-hour receiving slots and a fee for every missed one.

The operations team subcontracts the run to a carrier the business has used since February, loading at 2am for a 6am slot. Procurement signed the carrier agreement eight months ago. Compliance holds the carrier's insurance certificate from the original tender.

2am

The load runs late.

The trailer is ready two hours behind plan. The driver has waited at the dock; whether that was work or rest depends on what he did. [34]

4am

The slot does not move.

The run to Canberra takes about three hours. His records show work since 7pm: the run would end at the edge of his allowed hours, and he says he is tired.

6am

The fee applies.

A missed slot costs the business money. A made slot may have cost something worse.

The distribution centre did not drive the truck, but it set the constraint, and under the NHVR's advice the responsibility follows the constraint. [7] Here is what a careful compliance and procurement team has checked, and kept, before that night.

Check	What the NHVR or the law says	What to keep
The carrier, before the first booking	Find out how another business operates before you contract with it; you can also include provisions in the contract that give you access to its safety performance information. [6]	Accreditation where it holds one, insurance, and how it manages fatigue, on file with expiry dates
The booking system	Among the NHVR's examples of fatigue controls: booking systems that "allow for unexpected delays without penalty", and loading planned so goods are ready for collection on time. [14]	The booking rules, and how a delay is handled
The customer contract	The HVNL makes it an offence (page 7) to enter into a contract you know, or ought reasonably to know, would cause, or encourage, a driver to speed, drive while impaired by fatigue or unfit to drive, or drive a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle in breach of work and rest hours. [2]	Whether a late fee survives a delay caused at the dock, and whether the window can move
The dock that night	The forklift operator who loads the trailer holds a high risk work licence for the class, sighted before the work (r 85), and the waiting driver is kept clear of forklift traffic (s 19(2), r 214; model WHS laws). [19, 20]	The operator's licence on file; the driver inducted to the dock rules; the release, by name (page 16)
The night itself	Among the NHVR's widely used measures for managing fatigue: "contingency plans are worked out in advance in case of delays" and "a driver is never required to drive while fatigued or at risk of fatigue". [14]	His hours checked with the carrier; his word that he is unfit taken without pressure; a later slot or fresh driver; health details private

12 WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

One event, several reports.

A forklift strikes a carrier's driver on the dock, or a guard is threatened at the gate at night. Settle the routes before it happens.

One event. Several routes, each on its own clock, with its own owner.

WHS notifiable incident

A death, a serious injury or illness, or a dangerous incident (section 35). The person with management or control preserves the site, so far as is reasonably practicable, until an inspector arrives or directs otherwise (where the 2025 model change is adopted, until an inspector releases it, with the evidence), except to help an injured person, make the site safe, or for the other reasons the Act allows (section 39). The carrier and the DC can both hold these duties: agree a lead notifier, but each stays responsible for its own.

LAW model Act, Part 3 [19]

Immediately
The business notifies the regulator immediately after becoming aware of it; gives a written notice within 48 hours if the regulator requires one; and keeps a record for at least 5 years (section 38).

The same, in Victoria

The employer or self-employed person with management and control of the workplace where the incident happened notifies WorkSafe immediately after becoming aware of it, gives a written record within 48 hours, and keeps a copy for at least 5 years; the site is not disturbed until an inspector arrives or directs otherwise, except to protect health or safety, aid an injured person, or take essential action to make the site safe or prevent a further incident (ss 38 and 39).

LAW OHS Act 2004 (Vic) [24]

Immediately
For a contractor hurt at a Victorian DC, usually the DC.

The 2025 additions, where adopted

The model Act as at 5 December 2025 adds a violent incident (an assault or threat that exposes a person to a serious risk of psychological harm); makes a serious fall, or a mobile plant incident such as a forklift colliding with a person, a dangerous incident where it exposes someone to a serious risk; and adds notifiable extended absences and suicides. The ACT adopted the dangerous incident, site preservation, and shared workplace changes from 19 November 2025.

LAW model Act ss 35A, 35B, 37(1)(h), (m), 37A [19] REGULATOR WorkSafe ACT [32]

Only once adopted
Safe Work Australia says the changes "will only apply once they are adopted under local WHS laws", and to check with your local WHS regulator. [23]

Between the businesses

The carrier, the contractor's employer, the DC, and any labour-hire business. Where the 2025 model change is adopted, the business that must notify the regulator and the person with management or control of the workplace must each ensure the other is told (s 39A).

LAW where adopted, s 39A [23] GOOD PRACTICE elsewhere

Immediately
So far as is reasonably practicable, where adopted; elsewhere as soon as you can. Never held to the end of the shift.

Pressure on a driver

A late load, a missed slot, or a request to make up time. Not a report the law requires, but the moment the Primary Duty is tested.

GOOD PRACTICE

That shift
The dock supervisor: what happened and what changed (page 24).

Alone at the gate at 3am. A security officer works the gatehouse alone. Under the model WHS laws, that needs a system of work with effective communication (r 48). [20] Decide who watches the check-ins, what a missed one triggers, and what happens with no signal. **Who decides:** a named on-call manager for the site, who can stop work, call the emergency services, and decide who notifies the regulator; each contract names who reports what.

13 THE RECORD

What to hold for every carrier and contractor.

LAW a duty set by law, its form usually your choice; r and s numbers are the model WHS laws' unless marked HVNL, Victoria on page 11

REGULATOR guidance from the NHVR or a WHS regulator

GOOD PRACTICE not a legal requirement

Level	What to hold	Status and source
The carrier	How it operates, before the first booking: accreditation where held, insurance, and fatigue management	REGULATOR NHVR, before you contract [6]
	A contract right to its safety performance information, and when it was last used	REGULATOR NHVR, contracts [6]
	Whether it subcontracts, to whom, and who checks the next carrier and driver	GOOD PRACTICE
	Reviewed on change (incident, audit finding, new route, freight, or subcontractor, changed accreditation, defect), with owner and close-out; insurance or accreditation is not proof of lawful operation	GOOD PRACTICE
The contractor	Selection criteria and the evidence asked for: safety records, incidents, notices, and prosecutions	REGULATOR WorkSafe Tasmania [31]
	Insurance and workers compensation current: scope and status checked, not only expiry; a renewal does not re-approve on its own	GOOD PRACTICE
	The contract: WHS roles, who authorises the work, incident reporting, inductions, and telling you when they are on site	REGULATOR WorkSafe Tasmania [31] GOOD PRACTICE who authorises the work
The driver and vehicle	The driver and vehicle that arrived, at sign-in; schedules against each driver's hours option; the record keeper's assurance (the carrier, or an owner-driver) on work and rest records (page 16)	REGULATOR NHVR, scheduler controls and record keeping [14, 33] LAW if you schedule, the driver's work diary compliance, so far as is reasonably practicable, HVNL s 315 [2] GOOD PRACTICE the sign-in and the assurance
The worker	Written evidence of any high risk work licence, a forklift licence included, sighted before the work and kept for at least 1 year after it; class and current status checked, and reviewed if it is suspended, cancelled, or its conditions change	LAW licence evidence seen before the work and kept, r 85(1) and (4) [20] GOOD PRACTICE the status checks and review
	Licences the trade needs by law (page 13), such as an NSW electrical licence or a Refrigerant Handling Licence; current status checked	LAW NSW electrical licences; [29] LAW national Refrigerant Handling Licence [28] GOOD PRACTICE the status check
The site	An induction before they start: safety expectations, traffic rules, the emergency plan, and who can stop the work	REGULATOR WorkSafe Tasmania, the induction [31] GOOD PRACTICE the rest
	Each job's authorisation: risk assessment, traffic plan, permits and isolations, and the handback (page 17)	LAW managing the risks, model Act ss 17, 19, r 203; a confined space entry permit, r 67; page 17 [19, 20] GOOD PRACTICE other written assessments, permits, and the handback
The visit	Sign in and sign out, by site and by dock	GOOD PRACTICE
	Supervision proportionate to the work, higher for new contractors, high risk work, and complex work	LAW s 19(3)(f), so far as is reasonably practicable; levels from WorkSafe Tasmania [19, 31]
	A record of consultation with the other duty holders, and with the workers affected and their health and safety representatives	LAW consultation, so far as is reasonably practicable, ss 46 to 48; [19] REGULATOR the consultation code [22] GOOD PRACTICE the record

13 CHECKLIST

Before a carrier is booked, or a contractor starts.

	Check	Owner	Date checked
Know your chain, and your sites			
☐	We have listed which of the 10 functions our business performs, at each site. **Law, the duty, page 5** **Good practice, the register** a function register by site		
☐	We know which sites load or unload an average of 5 or more heavy vehicles each operating day, over the last 12 months or since opening. **Law, the loading manager test (HVNL s 5), page 4, and its duty, page 6** **Good practice, the count by site** dock volumes by site		
☐	We know who manages or controls each depot, DC, and dock, and for what. **Law, the duty, page 5** **Good practice, the register** a site register		
Before a carrier is booked			
☐	Every carrier was checked before its first job: how it operates, its insurance, and its accreditation where it holds one, with its scope, conditions, and status. **Regulator, page 14** **Good practice, the scope, conditions, and status check** the carrier file: scope, conditions, status, expiry		
☐	Our carrier contracts give us access to their safety performance information, and we use it. **Regulator, page 14** the clause, and the last time we asked		
☐	We know whether each carrier subcontracts, and who checks the next carrier and driver. **Good practice** subcontracting terms, and the subcontractor list		
☐	Where a load is dangerous goods, we know what that state's law asks of the driver, the vehicle, and the documents. **Law, the state's dangerous goods duties and licences, page 16** **Good practice, the check per load type**		
Contracts and bookings			
☐	Our booking system and customer contracts allow for delay without penalising a safe late arrival. **Regulator, page 19** booking rules, contract terms, delay records		
☐	No rate, bonus, scorecard, or preferred-carrier rule rewards speed over safe hours. **Law, the duty (s 26C(2)(b)), page 14** **Good practice, the dated review** a review of rates and scorecards		
☐	Every carrier agreement has been read against the 1 August 2026 changes. **Good practice** review date on each agreement		
Before a contractor's first visit			
☐	The company was assessed against clear selection criteria, including its safety record, with insurance and workers compensation current. **Regulator, the selection criteria** **Good practice, the insurance** the prequalification, dated		
☐	Each worker's licences for the work are on file: any high risk work licence, a forklift licence included, and any licence the trade needs by law, with class and current status checked. **Law, page 21** documents against each worker		
☐	Each worker's induction covered this site's traffic rules, its emergency plan, and who can stop the work. **Regulator, the induction** **Good practice, the rest** induction completion, per worker		

13 CHECKLIST

	Check	Owner	Date checked
	On the dock		
☐	Loads are ready on time, weighed accurately, within axle limits, and restrained to the performance standards; a named person releases the truck. **Law, page 16** **Good practice, the release** load plans, restraint checks, releases		
☐	Schedules are checked against each driver's hours option, and the driver's record keeper (the carrier, or an owner-driver) assures us the work and rest records are kept; if we schedule, we make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the driver complies with the work diary rules. **Regulator, pages 15 and 16** **Law, if you schedule, page 16** schedules, review notes, the assurance		
☐	Any forklift licence was sighted before the work, not after, and drivers wait away from forklift traffic. **Law, page 13** licence number, class, current status, expiry; the dock rules		
☐	Loaders, schedulers, and dock staff are trained in their part of the duty. **Regulator, page 15** who was trained, in what, and when		
	Before contractor work starts		
☐	The job has a risk assessment, a traffic plan, and any permit or isolation it needs. **Law, the duty to manage the risks (model Act ss 17, 19; r 203) and a confined space permit, page 17** **Good practice, other written assessments and site permits** numbers on the authorisation, page 18		
☐	Construction work was screened: any safe work method statement and construction induction checked, and for a construction project, the principal contractor named. **Law, pages 17 and 18** the screening, on the authorisation		
	Before returning the area to use		
☐	The area was handed back: plant tested, guards on, area cleared, signed off, permit closed. **Law, the duty, page 17** **Good practice, the form** the handback, signed		
	If something goes wrong		
☐	Every contractor and driver knows who to call at any hour and who can stop the work; a lone worker's check-ins are watched and a missed one escalated. **Law, page 20** **Good practice, the rest** the induction record, the check-in log		
☐	The contracts name a lead notifier and who protects the site; each business still meets its own duty. **Law, the duty, page 20** **Good practice, the clause** the clause, per contract		
	Management and reach		
☐	Each executive (a director or anyone concerned in managing the company; a partner; a management member) can show they check that all of this happens, not only that it is written down. **Law, pages 8 and 9** **Good practice, the verification report** verification records, not policies		
☐	Where we run freight into Western Australia or the Northern Territory, we have read the rules there. **Good practice** a note of the rules read, and when		

13 TEMPLATE

The carrier file: an evidence record.

One row per carrier; the first row is an example. The point is not the form; it is that the answer to "what did you check, and when?" exists in one place, with a date and a name against it.

Carrier	Checked before first job	Insurance: status and expiry	Accreditation: scope, conditions, status, expiry	Fatigue option and records	Safety info right	Last reviewed, why, by
Example Carriers Pty Ltd	*Yes, 3 February 2026*	*Current, to 30 June 2027*	*HVA General Safety, no conditions, current, to May 2028*	*Standard hours; carrier keeps the records, assurance sighted*	*Clause 14*	*12 October 2026, new subcontractor, J. Lee*

And one row per incident of pressure.

A late load, a missed slot, a request to make up time. These are the moments the duty is tested, so they are the moments worth recording.

Date	Site and carrier	What happened	What we changed or agreed	Recorded by
9 October 2026	*Western Sydney DC, Example Carriers*	*Load ready 2 hours late for a 6am Canberra slot*	*Driver said he was tired; 6am slot missed and the fee accepted; fresh driver for a 10am delivery; no time made up*	*Dock supervisor*

Rule numbers (r) and s 38(7) are from the model WHS laws; in Victoria, its own OHS Act and Regulations apply (page 11).

How long, and who sees it. Keep each record for the longest of the legal minimum (a high risk work licence record 1 year, r 85(4); a notifiable incident record 5 years, s 38(7); fatigue records 3 years, with the record keeper) and any hold for an incident or claim.[19, 20, 33] Where the Privacy Act applies to you, its employee records exemption covers only your own employees' employment records, not a carrier's or contractor's workers;[39] keep licence, telematics, and health details behind tighter access.

A paper file works until the carrier list grows. Past a handful of carriers and trades, the expiry dates are what slip: an insurance certificate that lapsed in March and was never asked for again. That is the problem the next page is about.

14 KEEPING IT CURRENT

The carrier file is contractor management.

Most of the evidence in this guide is about the carriers, owner-drivers, subcontractors, and trades you engage. That makes it contractor management, and it fails the same way: in spreadsheets and inboxes nobody can search when it matters.



Questions to ask about how you manage it today.

1. If you were asked tomorrow which carriers ran for you last month, and what each held on the day, how long would the answer take?
2. In how many places does one carrier's information live: procurement, the booking system, the dock, someone's inbox?
3. When an insurance certificate or an accreditation is renewed, who checks it, and how do they find out it is due?
4. When a carrier passes a run to a subcontractor, does anyone check that subcontractor, its driver, and its vehicle before the load leaves?
5. Does the dock know, at sign-in, whether the driver, the forklift operator, or the trade in front of it meets your requirements?
6. When a technician arrives to service a forklift or a dock leveller at 2am, who authorises the work, and who confirms it is handed back?
7. Can you see every site's carriers and contractors in one view, or does each site keep its own list?
8. When a document lapses, how long before someone notices, and what stops the next booking or the next visit in the meantime?

What to look for in a system.

- **A file that reaches past the company.** Each carrier's and contractor's workers, and the plant and vehicles they bring, held with it, so the check does not stop at the tender.
- **Requirements set once.** What each category of carrier or trade must hold, with each site's own on top.
- **Expiry tracked, apart from approval.** A reminder before a document lapses, and the status changed the day it does.
- **The check at the gate.** Drivers and trades sign in against the site's requirements, and a lapsed document is caught before access.
- **Work authorised on the record.** Permits for hot work, heights, confined spaces, and isolations raised and approved, with the crew signing in to the permit.
- **Connected to what you already run.** Procurement, maintenance and work orders, and access control, so the same details are not typed into three systems.
- **A view across every site.** Who is on site now, what was checked, by whom, and when, and a report an executive can read.

START SMALL

Start with the carriers you book most.

Whatever holds the file today, take your busiest carriers, your regular trades, and one distribution centre, and run the checklist on pages 22 and 23 against them. The gaps it shows are the ones worth closing first. Ask anyone offering a system to show each point above on your own carriers and sites.

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Every source, with the date it was read.

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This guide is general information, not legal advice. It summarises the Heavy Vehicle National Law and the NHVR's published guidance, the model Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations published by Safe Work Australia (as at 5 December 2025), Victoria's Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, and the other rules named in it, as read on the dates above. Penalty amounts are the NHVR's indexed figures for 1 August 2026 to 30 June 2027 and change every 1 July; this guide is due for review by 30 June 2027. It is a contractor management guide, not a technical manual for loading, fatigue, dangerous goods, or plant work. For your own operation, read the law in your jurisdiction and the regulator's guidance in full, and take legal advice.

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