

RISSB product for prioritisation

Primary information	
Type of product being suggested:	Guideline ⁱ
Title of product being suggested:	Good Practice in the Management of Rail Driver Health & Wellness
Date of suggestion:	February 2018
Reason for suggestion:	<p>Recent research has revealed that cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders and rates of obesity in rail drivers have risen over the last decade. They are significantly higher than the general population and continuing to rise.</p> <p>The National Health Standard for Rail Safety Workers was introduced in 2004, so why are drivers getting sicker?</p> <p>The National Health Standard was only intended as a monitoring tool, to help identify at-risk workers. But, many organisations used it to replace local health and wellness initiatives, and treated it as an intervention. It was not designed for this purpose and it will not improve health status.</p> <p>Unfortunately, operators do not know how to address the issue and coordinated effort is urgently needed to tackle it, so that this critical workforce may be safeguarded.</p> <p>This Good Practice Guideline will be designed to support the existing National Health Standard framework, and in doing so, create an urgent first-step for coordinating our efforts and promoting the Health and Wellness of the driver workforce in the industry.</p> <p>This Good Practice Guideline has also received written support from the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, and the Australasian Railway Association.</p>
Railway discipline area:	Operations, safety risk, health and wellness
Scope:	
<p><u>The scope of the project</u></p> <p>The project is concerned with the improvement in the health status of rail driver health, a critical workforce in the rail industry. While the product will also be broadly relevant for effectively managing the health and wellness of other shift-workers in the industry, its specific focus will be rail drivers. The outcome of the project would be the creation of a national Guideline in accordance with RISSB's accredited development process. There is a significant body of contemporary work that would form a basis for this guideline. As such it is expected that the development effort/cost would be minimal and the end product would be extremely high value and low cost.</p> <p><u>The scope of the guideline</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Compile a comprehensive account of barriers to health status that have been shown to impede health status within rail – Compile a comprehensive account of facilitators that may be used to overcome these barriers, and improve health status 	

- Categorise health facilitators
- Show what can be done to promote rail driver health and wellness at the rail organisational level
- Show what can be done to overcome the barriers associated with job design and shift-work associated with rail driving
- Show how rail drivers may be able to ‘work around’ health barriers at an individual level
- Incorporate research that has already been carried out by CQUniversity and Flinders University, including facilitators that have been used and validated by Australian rail drivers (i.e. reflecting the bespoke profile of the rail industry)

Objective:

What: The objective of the product is to provide guidance in the form of current best practice for managing the health and wellness of rail drivers.

Why: Driving initiatives to improve rail driver health status has become a critical issue for sustainability. In the absence of this kind of guidance, the National Health Standard is being viewed as an intervention, which is not what it was designed for. This Guideline will provide current international and specific Australian-centric best practice in a way that will complement the current National Health Standard.

For Whom: Education is an important part of inspiring and assisting others in the pursuit of health and wellness. This product is intended for use by health and wellness coordinators, and those involved with development/management of safety management systems

Hazard identification:

1	10.13 Unfit worker on duty	6	
2	10.13.1.1 Ineffective health standard (especially the way it is being perceived / used)	7	
3	10.3.1.1. Overrun of Limit of Authority	8	
4		9	
5		10	

Benefits:

Safety

It is very telling that the 2010 impact assessment of the National Health Standard revealed that 47% of our rail drivers were obese. Our recent national survey indicates that this figure has increased over the past eight years. Increased incidence of cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders such as diabetes, and other comorbidities are a serious problem for rail driving, where they are associated with specific safety risks and negative outcomes, such as sleep apnoea and potential for sudden incapacity while driving. Research also suggests that these issues may be linked to operational incidents such as signal passed at danger event (SPADs). Safe guarding the health and wellness of our drivers corresponds directly with measurable improvements in safety, advancements of the health, safety and wellbeing of the industry, and reducing risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

Operators have an obligation to discharge their duty of care for workers, and this Guideline may be used to ensure access to critical information in order to make that happen. As coordinated efforts are required, it is also the first-step in the safety case for promoting rail driver health and wellness.

Interoperabilityⁱⁱ / harmonisationⁱⁱⁱ

Despite these serious risk factors, very little sharing or learning is happening on this issue. One of the reasons for this is that many operators do not know how to address the issues, or may not even know this to be a significant contributing factor. This product will achieve greater transparency of this issue, and provide clear and evidence-based information about actions that organisations can take to tackle it.

As a source of valuable information specifically for a target audience, the various practices and initiatives provided could be easily adopted into organisations and applied nationally, laying the foundation for interoperability.

This Guideline is critical for ensuring that RISSB members can learn from what others are doing both in Australia and internationally, and understand how different environments (e.g. heavy haul, passenger, light rail) can tackle the issue. It is an essential first-step to create harmonisation and interoperability across the industry.

Financial

Rail driver ill-health places a significant financial burden on the rail industry in terms of absenteeism and decreased productivity. At a fundamental level, improving the health status of rail drivers will create economies of scale through such things as:

1. Reduced tardiness and absenteeism
2. Decreased turnover, and
3. Dissolving workplace distractions.

Beyond individual health, improved health status is linked with employee loyalty and improved culture. While this is difficult to measure in the short term, it is evident in that employees will:

1. Show increased dependability and self-drive
2. Achieve goals
3. Seek solutions to problems
4. Be enthusiastic around customers
5. Show ownership for company services
6. Speak positively about their company in a variety of settings, and
7. Defend company policies and ways of working.

As rail drivers are an aging cohort with a high turnover, it is critical to safeguard their health in order to increase safety, prevent skills shortages and deliver future demand for rail services.

This Guideline is 'low-hanging fruit' from the RISSB product development perspective. It will translate findings that funded as part of a university Merit Grant between CQUniversity and Flinders University.

A Guideline document for health and wellness in rail drivers does not currently exist in Australia and is a rarity in other countries. While the GB Rail Safety Standards Board has commenced on 5-year Roadmap to improve the health status of the rail workforce, they also lack such a document. A RISSB product in this space will therefore not only improve the health status of our own workforces, it will support further innovation and economic benefit of Australian rail through shared learning and stronger partnerships.

Environmental

N/A

Impacts:

This Guideline will be informed by Australian research that has already been conducted for the most part, and accepted through peer review in scientific journals. While additional material will also be assimilated, the actual risk in terms of impacts, constraints, or problems is very minimal.

i Definition for Guideline

Guidelines provide informative, advisory guidance material on a range of subjects to streamline particular processes according to a set routine. Guidelines can often be developed rapidly to meet short term or urgent need for the industry. By definition, RISSB Guidelines are informative rather than normative.

Definition for Code of Practice

Codes of Practice provide practical and detailed information on how to achieve compliance with requirements contained in standards and legislation. CoP are considered normative and detail methods and processes that are considered to produce superior results, or that the industry considers 'good practice'.

Definition for Standard

Standards are published documents setting out specifications and procedures designed to ensure that products, services and systems are safe, reliable and consistently perform the way they were intended to. They establish a common language that defines quality and safety criteria. Standards are based on sound industrial, scientific and consumer experience and are regularly reviewed to ensure that they keep pace with advances in technology. RISSB Standards are primarily developed to address hazards within the Australian rail industry.

ii Interoperability - the ability of a process, system or a product to work with other process, systems or products (aka compatible systems through managed interfaces).

iii Harmonisation - the act of bringing into agreement so as to work effectively together (aka uniformity of systems).