

# Safe Decisions

A framework for considering safety when making decisions in the Australian Rail Industry

**GUIDELINE**



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## Acknowledgment

This document is based on Taking Safe Decisions published by the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) (UK) in 2009. It also contains material from the second edition of Taking Safe Decisions which was published in July 2014. RISSB would like to acknowledge the significant research and consultation effort undertaken by RSSB in producing its guidance which has been relied upon in the development of Safe Decisions.

RISSB would also like to acknowledge Nova Systems who offered their guidance document - Survey and Analysis of Risk Decision Criteria and the Tolerability Framework for Application in the Australian Context as a reference in the development of Safe Decisions.

# Document Control

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## Guideline Change Procedures

RISSB maintains the master for this document and publishes the current version on the RISSB website.

Any changes to the content of this publication require the version number to be updated.

Changes to this publication must be approved according to the procedure for developing management system documents.

RISSB will identify and communicate changes to this publication.

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## Overview

Almost every policy, investment or operational decision made by the Australian rail industry has an impact on safety. It is therefore vital that safety considerations are embedded effectively into the decision making process.

*Safe Decisions* has been adapted from Taking Safe Decisions which was first published by the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) in the UK in 2009 and updated in July 2014. It describes the Australian industry view of how decisions should be made that properly protect the safety of rail industry workers, passengers and others, satisfy the law and respect the interests of stakeholders, whilst remaining commercially sound. There are good decisions and poor decisions. Poor decisions can result in action under law regardless of why they were made or the evidence to substantiate the decision making process. In other words it is important that the outcome of decision making meets safety outcomes rather than focussing on the process.

The RSSB document was based on an extensive programme of research, analysis and consultation, which RSSB carried out to clarify how this balance is achieved. Utilising cross-industry input, the principles of the UK document have been examined under local conditions and *Safe Decisions* has been revised to reflect the Australian context. The following pages now describe a broad consensus view of how decisions that impact safety should be made.

In Australia duty holders should make decisions that properly protect the safety of rail industry workers, passengers and members of the public, satisfy the law, respect the interests of stakeholders and are commercially sound.

These different decision types have different implications and involve different considerations. The understanding and clarity that this document brings to the process may result in changes to what has previously been done in some parts of industry. Key clarifications are:

- Societal concern about risk impacts on government decision making. This document states that societal concern should not be taken into account by duty holders when deciding whether a measure is necessary to ensure safety so far as is reasonably practicable (SFAIRP). However, the impact of societal concern on an organisation's reputation might mean that the organisation takes account of it optionally for business reasons.
- A judgement about whether a measure is required to ensure safety so far as is reasonably practicable may be supported by either a qualitative risk analysis or a quantitative risk assessment which in some circumstances might include a cost-benefit analysis (CBA).

*Safe Decisions* describes these key principles in full and provides guidance on what they mean in practice for those making decisions that impact upon safety.

*Safe Decisions* consists of two parts:

- Part 1 - Principles
- Part 2 - The Decision Making Framework

Part 1 of the document should be of interest to both senior managers and safety practitioners. Part 2 provides guidance targeted at safety practitioners. In support of the guideline case studies which illustrate the principles will be published separately on the RISSB website and updated from time to time.