

# National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers

## Information for rail safety workers

February 2017

**The *National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers* aims to ensure the national rail system is safe and to help rail workers maintain sound health and fitness. It also aims to ensure health assessment standards are consistent across the rail industry.**

The updated edition reflects advances in medical knowledge, recent changes in rail operating environments, consideration of new legislation requirements and alignment with medical criteria in the Assessing Fitness to Drive (AFTD) standards.

The latest review of the Standard included extensive consultation with industry, rail unions, rail safety regulators, government transport departments and health professionals.

This fact sheet contains important information about how the health assessments work and what it means to you as a rail safety worker.



## Rail safety work – why is your health important?

Rail safety work can involve complex tasks requiring perception, good judgement, responsiveness and sound physical capability. A range of medical conditions, as well as treatments, may therefore impair fitness to work.

The system of health assessments for rail safety workers aims to ensure that you can continue to conduct your work safely. It also aims to ensure early identification and management of health conditions that might impact on your work if left untreated.

Rail safety worker health assessments ensure that appropriate management can be initiated at an early stage to help support your continuing long term employment. Importantly, they also mean that health assessments are conducted in a way that protects your privacy and provides for equal opportunity.

## What are your responsibilities?

As a rail safety worker you have a responsibility to consider the effect your health has on your ability to do your job safely. This applies to your general health as well as the use of drugs and alcohol. If you suspect you have, or are developing, a condition which may affect your ability to do your job safely, you should:

- tell your supervisor and request a health assessment
- tell your treating doctor about the type of work you do and follow your doctor's advice.

You are also required to:

- respond honestly to questions asked of you by the examining health professional
- comply with treatments and review periods as advised by the examining health professional.

## What sort of health assessment will you have and how is this determined?

The health monitoring system is based on a risk management approach to confirm your health and fitness match the requirements of the tasks you perform.

Determination of which category a rail safety worker falls into is based on consideration of the following question:

*To what extent does the worker's physical and psychological health impact on the safety of the public or the rail network?*

## Safety critical workers

Safety critical workers are those whose action or inaction due to ill-health may lead directly to a serious incident affecting the public or the rail network. The health of these workers is critical.

There are two categories of safety critical worker:

### Category 1

- Highest level of safety critical worker.
- Requires high levels of attentiveness to their task.
- Sudden incapacity or collapse (e.g. from a heart attack or blackout) may result in a serious incident affecting the public or the rail network.
- Example: Driving a single-operator train on the commercial network is a Category 1 task.

### Category 2

- Also requires high levels of attentiveness.
- Works in an environment where fail-safe mechanisms, or the nature of their duties, ensure sudden incapacity or collapse does not affect safety of the rail network.
- Example: In many cases signallers are classified as Category 2 because fail-safe signal control systems protect the safety of the network in the case of worker incapacity.

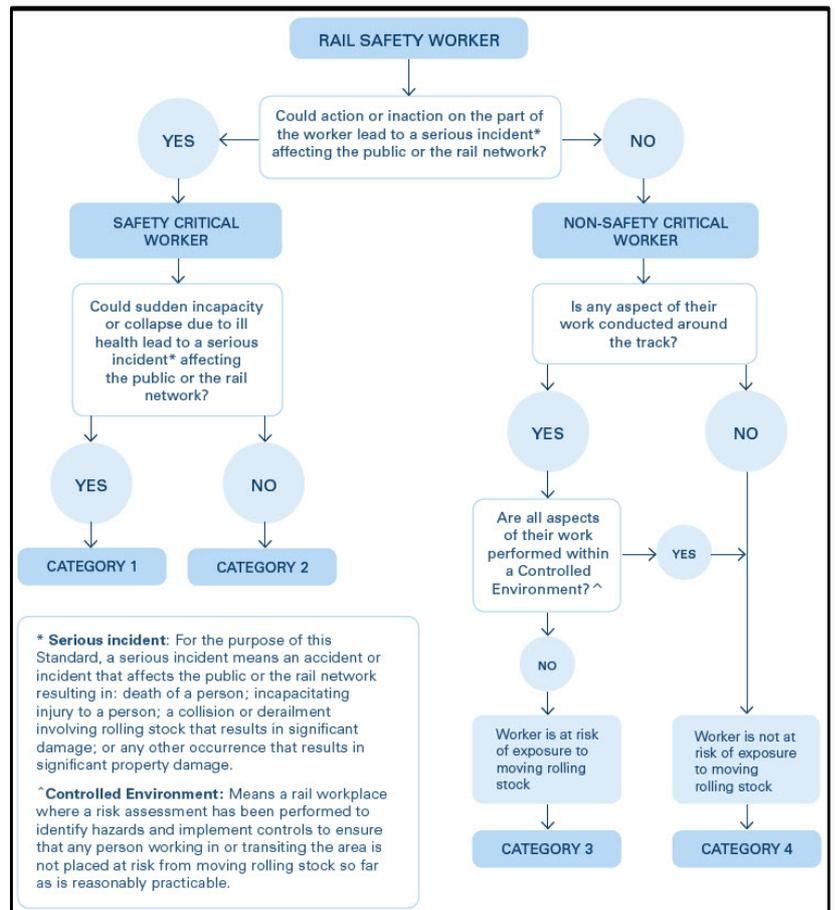


Figure 1: Risk categorisation of rail safety workers

## Non-safety critical workers (including Around the Track Personnel – ATP)

Non-safety critical workers are those whose health and fitness will not impact directly on the public or the rail network. However, they must be able to protect their own safety and that of fellow workers.

Their risk category and their health assessment requirements depend on their likely exposure to moving rolling stock.

There are two categories for non-safety critical risk:

- Around the Track Personnel (ATTP) who operate in an uncontrolled environment (Category 3).
- Other, including ATTP who operate in a controlled environment (Category 4).

Around the Track Personnel (ATTP) who operate in an environment where they may be at risk from moving rolling stock are classed as Category 3, and are required to have health assessments to identify relevant health risks.

ATTP who do not work around the track and are not at risk from moving rolling stock are classified as Category 4, and are not required to have health assessments under this Standard.

## When are health assessments required?

The system of health assessments aims to ensure that you can undertake your job safely throughout the term of your employment. It includes:

- **Pre-placement or change of risk category health assessments**  
Health assessments are conducted at pre-placement and before changing to a position involving tasks in a higher risk category (for example when changing from Category 2 to Category 1). These assessments make sure your health and fitness match the requirements of the tasks you will perform.
- **Periodic health assessments**  
These assessments aim to monitor your health at regular intervals during your employment to identify conditions that might affect rail safety. The frequency of periodic health assessments will vary depending on your risk category. Frequencies for the revised Standard are noted in the table below.
- **Triggered health assessments**  
These assessments may be prompted at any time as a result of concerns about your health. They are particularly important for ensuring appropriate management of sudden or unexpected illnesses. The assessment may be initiated by your employer or by you.

## Frequency of periodic health assessments

### Category 1: High level safety critical worker

### Category 2: Safety critical worker

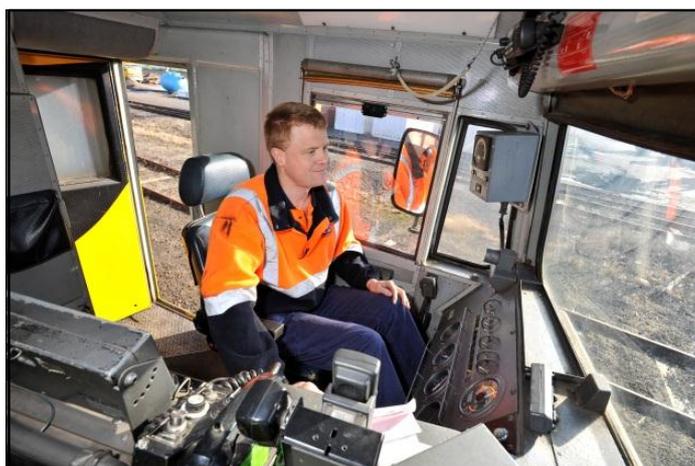
At the time of commencement then:

- every 5 years to age 50, then
- every 2 years to age 60, then
- every year.

### Category 3: ATTP in uncontrolled environment

At the time of commencement then:

- at 40 years of age, then
- every 5 years.



## What is the safety critical worker health questionnaire?

All safety critical workers (Category 1 and 2) are required to complete a health questionnaire as part of their periodic health assessment. The questionnaire asks about medical history and includes a number of health screening questions. The examining doctor will use these responses to guide the clinical examination.

## Does the updated Standard make it more difficult to pass your health assessment?

The rail safety worker health assessments are designed to monitor your health so that problems are identified, treated and reviewed appropriately, and so that you can continue to work and perform your tasks safely.

The updated health assessments may be more effective in identifying health problems but this doesn't necessarily mean you will fail the assessment or that you will be found unfit for duty.

Any condition that is identified will be assessed and managed at an early stage and may be monitored more regularly to ensure continued fitness for duty. Ultimately, it means that you can expect to benefit personally from improved health monitoring whilst ensuring the safety of the rail network.

## Who pays for health assessments?

If you are a paid employee, your employer will pay for the health assessment. This may not apply if you are a volunteer in a tourist railway. However, if treatment is found to be necessary, the cost will not be covered by the employer. You will be referred to your own doctor for treatment which may be covered by Medicare or your private health insurance.

## What will your employer know about you and your health?

In accordance with privacy legislation, personal health information remains confidential between you and the examining doctor. The only information that passes from the examining doctor to your employer is a statement regarding your fitness for duty. Examples of the statement include:

- Fit for duty
- Fit for duty subject to review
- Temporarily unfit for duty
- Permanently unfit for duty.

Medical information is not provided to your employer. If your organisation has a chief medical officer (CMO) they may review your health record and/or speak to the examining health professional in order to guide your overall management. Any information received by the CMO must be kept confidential and cannot be discussed with, or accessed, by any other person in your organisation.

## What about OHS assessments?

The system for rail safety health assessments does not include assessments undertaken for the purposes of occupational health and safety (such as occupational noise exposure).

For further information, please contact:

- Your supervisor, your company doctor or your health and safety officer.
- The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator  
[www.onrsr.com.au](http://www.onrsr.com.au)
- The National Transport Commission  
[www.ntc.gov.au](http://www.ntc.gov.au)