

Accreditation

The Safety & Technical Services Branch's Approach to Audits

Presenter: Tricia Brett, Department of Transport Victoria, Safety & Technical Services Branch

Session Chair: David Verrier

Session Secretary: David Critchley

Notes from the Session Secretary

Tricia's Background

- Emigrated from Bristol, UK, to Melbourne.
- Began as a conductress at Essendon tram depot.
- Promoted to driver, then depot starter and inspector.
- Accepted a job in Fleet Operations, then moved to Maintenance Liaison in the Engineering division at Jolimont Railway Workshops.
- Became an OH&S advisor and following university study began working in Risk Management in the Safety & Technical Services Branch at the Department of Transport.

History of Accreditation

Accreditation became mandatory in January 1999 and there are approximately 70 rail companies accredited to date. The main accreditation standards are the AS4292 and/or VRSA guidelines.

The Audit Process

All accredited operators must have a compliance audit annually. Usually the same person will undertake the audit to ensure similar standards, although audit checks are also undertaken by a third party.

There is normally two weeks' notice given before an audit is undertaken. A telephone call is made to arrange date, time and venue and this is followed up by written confirmation, including the scope of the audit.

The auditors will use a checklist and take notes. Non-compliant points will be highlighted and discussed.

It is important that *all* are aware of policies and procedures. Auditors may ask anyone questions regarding policies and procedures and this is an area where many companies 'come unstuck'.

During the audit, the reviewers will ask to see systems, documents and records such as:

- Rail Safety Management System.
- Follow-up progress on previous concerns and issues.

- Changes to management structure and responsibilities.
- Internal review process.

Ongoing internal reviews are very important. They pick up on any problems long before an official audit is made. Thus problems can be rectified sooner and you will avoid further dramas with the official audit.

Risk management is important when the public is involved. Museums have the responsibility to carry passengers safely.

Training and re-training is critical to the safe operation of railways and tramways, especially where volunteers are not performing tasks on a daily basis.

After the Audit

The auditor will arrange a meeting to discuss the audit with you. They will explain any areas of concern including:

- Non-compliance – where you have no policies in place to cover a particular operation.
- Non-conformance – where you have a policy but it is not being undertaken or followed correctly.
- Observations – areas where the audit can see ‘room for improvement’.

A future audit will be scheduled and a written audit report will be supplied.

Material Change

Accreditation can be bestowed on companies that are operators of rail equipment or managers of rail equipment, or both. Over time a company may change their business operation (for example, from manager to operator, or vice versa). Many times businesses will not report on any fundamental changes to the business. This is called a ‘material change’ and not reporting material changes is actually breaking the accreditation contract.

Material changes can include:

- Operation and driving of trams.
- Extensions of activities including new track extensions.
- Control of movement of trams.
- Changes to design, construction, maintenance of equipment and infrastructure.
- Changes to safety-related policies and procedures.

The Future

Following the safety investigation into the Ararat collision, a number of changes to the audit review are being implemented. These include:

- Whole of systems analysis, where the entire aspect of operations will be examined from the audit process to the interaction and communication of linked and related systems and processes.
- Spot audits to check on compliance with accreditation, where specific policies and procedures will be targeted instead of a general overall view.
- Follow-up on non-conformances will occur.
- Follow-up on accident/incident reports will be undertaken.

Discussion

Bill Kingsley (BTM) – What if a driver should become a victim of a road rage incident? Should it be reported?

Answer – Road rage training is not currently undertaken and does not need reporting under current Victorian accreditation.

Greg Robinson (Limestone Coast Railway) – Limestone Coast Railway had an incident of road rage involving a truck driver. The driver subsequently made an official report to the authorities and this was followed up at the Railway's next safety review. The Railway now has a file for 'non-official' incidents that can be accessed easily if questions are asked.

Answer – Contractors must also be made aware of your safety policies and standards, because while they are in your environment you have responsibility for their safety.

Bob Pearce (PETS) – At what point or degree will accreditation be cancelled?

Answer – The operator will be issued with a 'show cause' letter. Follow-up meeting, reports, spot checks and audits may be undertaken. If no improvements are made by the operator, accreditation will be cancelled. Three accreditations have been cancelled to date.

David Harre (Tram for Wanganui, Inc) – A large government structure has been created to oversee rail safety accreditation. Is there any system in place to manage the 'effectiveness' of this structure? What companies are involved with regards to keeping the historical accuracy of tramcar restoration compared to current safety practices?

Answer – Whole systems analysis is response to looking at the audit process. Auditors are also audited and reviewed at regular intervals. Audit reports can be reviewed by a third party or an auditor's superior. Auditors are generally sympathetic and understanding of heritage issues. The slower speed of heritage trams and the safety awareness of drivers and conductors are a benefit to safety on heritage tramways. The auditor will compromise if they are satisfied that safety will not be compromised.

John Radcliffe (AETM) – How does each state interact and recognise each other's work? Are you moving to any standardisation?

Answer – IGA agreements are in place between each of the states. Combined audits are done on operations involving interstate operations. We are currently not moving to any standardisation.

Colin Seymour (AETM) – Under the RSA (SA) AS4292, we have to supply an annual safety report of incidents and safety initiatives. Is this a requirement in Victoria?

Answer – No, this is not in this state at the moment.

Bruce Gamble (MOTAT) – Commented on the notification of incidents and accidents. MOTAT, he explained, keeps a non-notifiable incident report which helps with safety management.

David Frodsham (NTM Crich, UK) – Emphasises the need to monitor internal trends including near-misses in order to manage safety.

Tim Borchers (Bendigo) was then invited by Tricia to explain Bendigo's experiences with accreditation.

Chair David Verrier then proposed a vote of thanks to Tricia, which was carried with acclamation.