



Fitness for Work

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1. Introduction

Many activities and processes carried out in rail infrastructure construction and rail operation industries involve inherent risks capable of causing permanent disabling injury or fatality to persons, including members of the public. Such activities and processes, otherwise termed '*safety critical activities*' typically require multiple layers of control such that the achievement of construction delivery and a productive operation is balanced with preventing the occurrence of events with fatal consequences.

Persons performing safety critical work activities are known as '*safety critical workers*' as they are relied upon to follow safe systems of work and are expected to have full, unimpaired control of their physical and mental capabilities to perform their roles without risk to themselves or others.

Minimum safe work systems are prescribed in the *Work Health & Safety Act 2011* and *Regulation 2017*, and more specifically the *Rail Safety (NSW) 2012* and *Heavy Vehicle (2013) National Laws* requiring the application of specific controls associated with impairment arising from drugs and alcohol, fatigue, and personal fitness, both physical and mental.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Standard is to establish and maintain systems of work that ensures risks associated with persons reduced fitness for work are identified, evaluated, and managed in a systematic manner to prevent asset damage, injuries, and fatalities to personnel, including members of the public.

This standard establishes a systematic risk-based approach for the prevention and control of circumstances likely to reduce a person's fitness for work including physical impairment, medical conditions, emotional stress, fatigue, psychological stress and alcohol and drugs.

3. Scope

This Standard applies to:

- All personnel including permanent, temporary, and casual employees; NSW government secondees, contingent labour and consultants working under the direction of Sydney Metro.
- Principal Contractors (PCs) their sub-contractors and visitors when identifying and managing any individual who has carried out, is carrying out, or is about to carry out *rail safety work* (s.8(1))¹.

PCs must develop, document, and implement fitness for work systems as prescribed in relevant contract deeds and specifications, including the *Principal Contractor Health and Safety Standard*.

The term *fitness for work* used herein shall mean a person's physical, mental, or emotional state that when adversely affected will reasonably cause loss of consciousness or incapacity, impairment of awareness, concentration, balance or coordination or significant limitation of mobility.

The term *safety critical activity* used herein shall mean any activity or process that is crucial to preventing or mitigating hazards that present an inherent risk of permanent disabling injury or fatality.

The term *safety critical role* used herein shall mean any reasonably foreseeable circumstance where a person's reduced fitness for work may compromise their ability to perform safety critical activities thereby posing a significant risk of harm to them self and others.

Requirements associated with workers compensation claims and return to work systems are excluded from the scope of this standard and shall be managed by the TfNSW Shared Services Workers Compensation team.

¹ Rail Safety National Law (NSW) No 82a of 2012

4. Requirements

A risk register shall be maintained that identifies and details safety critical activities, including sufficiently describing the individual activities and work conditions associated with each activity.

The risk register shall identify all roles where a reduced fitness for work may reasonably compromise a person's ability to perform safety critical activities including, but not limited to:

- Physical impairment.
- Medical condition.
- Emotional stress.
- Fatigue.
- Psychological stress; and
- Alcohol and drugs.

The risk register shall be used to inform the selection and prioritisation of controls to be documented in procedures for management of persons performing safety critical activities.

Procedures shall be developed and available to all personnel managing individuals with a reduced fitness for work to provide instruction on how persons are to be systematically managed such that opportunities to regain fitness for work are optimised.

4.1 Fitness for Work Program

A documented program shall be in place that ensures risks associated with reduced fitness for work are controlled in a systematic manner and shall include, but not be limited to:

- Roles, responsibilities, and competency requirements for all personnel:
 - conducting, supervising, and authorising safety critical activities.
 - conducting, supervising, and interpreting the results of alcohol, drug and hydration testing.
 - conducting, supervising, and interpreting the results of health assessments.
- Assessing and managing risks, including:
 - Methods for identifying and reporting persons with a reduced fitness for work.
 - Methods for assessing and evaluating rosters and work schedules.
- Methods for the systematic control of risks, including:
 - Methods for the managing persons to regain their fitness for work.
- Methods for monitoring and reviewing, including:
 - Criteria for physical fitness.
 - Acceptable limits for alcohol, drugs, and hydration.
 - Methods for conducting alcohol, drug, and hydration testing.
 - Systems for conducting medical surveillance.
- Sound ethical and clinical practice.
- Confidentiality provisions; and
- Training and awareness.

Persons shall not conduct work activities unless they are in a physical and mental condition that will permit them to carry out the requirements of their role in a safe and capable manner.

4.2 Managing Individuals with a Reduced Fitness for Work

A program shall be in place that supports safety critical workers to report to their leader any condition that may compromise their ability to perform safety critical activities.

A program shall be in place that ensures persons who are required to regain fitness for their work are provided assistance, which may include, but not be limited to:

- Referral to an employee assistance program (EAP).
- Paid or unpaid leave.
- Temporary modification to a person's work duties and roster arrangements; and
- Individual rehabilitation programs.

4.3 Managing Shifts, Hours of Work and Fatigue

A documented fatigue management program shall be in place that ensures the design of rosters and work schedules are assessed and evaluated such that safety critical workers are afforded adequate sleep opportunity and recovery time between shifts, and shall include consideration of travel, eating, personal care and social activities.

A documented program shall be in place that ensures person's fitness for work is not adversely affected by fatigue and shall include, but not be limited to:

- maximum permissible hours of work for each workday, work week and three-month period.
- methods for managing fatigued individuals.
- provision of adequate meal breaks and rest periods.
- methods for managing circumstances likely to result in fatigue, including:
 - night shift.
 - call back of persons to perform work activities, including overtime.
 - emergency response.
 - extension of a person's shift past 12 hours.
 - extension of a person's scheduled roster.
 - work related travel.
 - person's engaging in demanding extracurricular activities outside of work; and
 - travel to and from work.
- methods of managing accrued leave balances and requests for leave; and
- methods for controlling safety critical activities during periods when circadian cycles are most likely to influence periods of sleepiness in persons.

4.4 Drug and Alcohol Testing

A documented program must be in place to ensure risks associated with alcohol and other drugs are managed and persons:

- BAC is not above 0.00%.
- Illicit drug concentrations are below the cut-off levels prescribed in AS/NZS 4308; and
- Are not under the influence of any substance that affects their ability to perform their duties.

Procedures must include provisions for:

- Standardised testing of alcohol and other drugs.
- Reporting non-conforming test results; and
- Testing in the following circumstances:
 - When voluntarily requested.
 - Random testing.
 - Post-incident.
 - Suspicion of impairment caused by alcohol and/or drugs; and
 - Testing performed in accordance with an agreed return to work program.

4.4.1 Authorised Testing Officers

Testing *Rail Safety Workers* for alcohol and drugs shall only be conducted by authorised testing officers.

4.5 Thermal Stress

A program shall be in place that ensures person's fitness for work is not adversely affected by thermal stress and shall include, but not be limited to:

- Assessment and evaluation of thermal exposures.
- Identification of individuals displaying signs and symptoms of thermal stress.
- Provision of suitable PPE and other equipment.
- Ensuring availability of potable water sources and containers for use; and
- Providing adequate thermal recovery periods.

4.6 Medical Surveillance

A documented program shall be in place that ensures all personnel commencing work in safety critical roles participate in health assessments.

Health assessments shall be conducted in accordance with the *Sydney Metro Standard on Medical Surveillance* (SM-TD-HS-PER-02) and shall include, but not be limited to:

- Pre-placement medical examination.
- Periodic medical examinations; and
- Evaluation of fitness against relevant safety critical role acceptability criteria.

4.7 Training and Competency

A program shall be in place that ensures all personnel managing individuals with a reduced fitness for work are trained and competent to do so, and shall include, but not be limited to personnel:

- Providing counselling.
- Interpreting the results of alcohol, drug and hydration tests and health assessments.
- Evaluating persons fitness for work; and
- Designing and implementing plans for individuals to regain their fitness for work.

Persons conducting alcohol, drug and hydration tests shall be trained and competent in the operation of testing instrumentation and shall include, but not be limited to:

- Operating the instrument in the manner for which it was intended.
- Determining by inspection, the instrument has no damage and is suitable for operation.
- Understanding the limitations of instrumentation; and
- Identifying inconclusive or incorrect results and action required in such circumstances.

5. Definitions

All terminology in this Standard is taken to mean the generally accepted or dictionary definition. Acronyms and terms specific to this document are tabled below. Other terms and jargon are defined within the [SM-17-00000203 Sydney Metro Glossary](#).

Table 1: Terms/acronyms and definitions

	Definitions
Authorised Testing Officer	A person appointed under the Rail Safety National Law (NSW) Part 3, Division 9, for the purposes of conducting Drug and Alcohol Testing.
BAC	Blood alcohol concentration.
Documented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written description of a prescribed course of actions or process; or • A piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record.
Drug	A medicine or other substance that has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body. Drugs include prescription, pharmaceutical or illegal drugs.
Fatigue	<p>Fatigue is a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion that reduces a person's ability to perform work safely and effectively.</p> <p>Fatigue does not only manifest itself in physical irregularities but also has cognitive, psychological and physiological effects that may combine to impede performance and exacerbate safety risks. The effects of fatigue can accumulate over time.</p>
Fitness for work	A person's physical, mental or emotional state that when adversely affected will reasonably cause loss of consciousness or incapacity, impairment of awareness, concentration, balance or coordination or significant limitation of mobility.
Program	A structured and coordinated approach designed to manage health and safety risks and prevent workplace incidents, injuries, and illnesses.
Rail Safety Work	Work described under Section 8 of the Rail Safety National Law 2012 as Rail Safety Work.
Rail Safety Worker	A person who has carried out, who is carrying out, or who is about to perform Rail Safety Work (as defined in the Rail Safety National Law 2012).
Reasonably Foreseeable	A likelihood of injury or damage that a reasonable person should be able to anticipate in a given set of circumstances.

	Definitions
Safety Critical Activity	Any activity or process that is crucial to preventing or mitigating hazards that present an inherent risk of permanent disabling injury or fatality.
Safety Critical Role	Any reasonably foreseeable circumstance where a person's reduced fitness for work may compromise their ability to perform safety critical activities, thereby posing a significant risk of harm to themselves and others.
Shall/must/will	Means that an action is compulsory.
Shift	Fixed hours of work that is performed by an individual that are outside or partly outside of normal working hours (e.g. 9am – 5pm). Also referred to as a work roster.

6. Related documents and references

Related documents and references
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail Safety National Law (NSW) and Regulation • Work Health & Safety Act 2011 • Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW) • Sydney Metro Standard on Medical Surveillance (SM-TD-HS-PER-02)

7. Document History

Version	Date of approval	Notes
V1.0	2 April 2013	
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V11.0	28 February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to new Sydney Metro Drug and Alcohol Policy and Procedure. • Deletion of all duplicated information that is contained in the Drug and Alcohol Policy and Procedure. • Alignment to TfNSW Fatigue and Health related standards and procedures • Refer to Briefing Note #:BN-SM-24-001535 (SM-24-00316102).
V11.0	06 February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed review date to 30 Dec 2026 to comply with the recent changes to Australian Standards impacting Drug and Alcohol programs