



Vehicle Standards Guide (VSG-11)

Fitting of additional reflectors and conspicuity markings

Purpose

This guide provides advice to heavy vehicle owners and operators about the fitting of additional reflectors and conspicuity markings on heavy vehicles intended to improve their visibility.

Introduction

The ability to readily see and identify a heavy vehicle, especially in low light and low visibility environments, has important road safety benefits. In the early 1990s, to improve heavy vehicle visibility, the Federal Office of Road Safety introduced a requirement for motor vehicles with a gross vehicle mass (GVM) over 12 tonnes and trailers with an aggregate trailer mass (ATM) over 10 tonnes to be fitted with rear marking plates.

Since this time, alternate approaches to improving the visibility of heavy vehicles have been developed such as the fitting of additional high grade retro-reflective material along the sides and rear of heavy vehicles (known as conspicuity markings).

While not compulsory in Australia, voluntary fitting of additional reflectors or conspicuity markings to heavy vehicles is becoming more common and clearly shows the commitment of the industry to improving road safety.

Requirements for vehicle reflectors and conspicuity markings

The fitting of any reflective material to a heavy vehicle, including conspicuity markings, is regulated by both the *Australian Design Rules (ADRs)* and the *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation* (the National Regulation).

Additional reflectors excluding conspicuity markings

If fitting additional reflective material (other than conspicuity markings) to a heavy vehicle:

- Only yellow reflectors may be fitted to the side of a vehicle.
- Only red reflectors may be fitted to the rear of a heavy vehicle.
- No additional reflectors may be fitted to the front of a heavy vehicle.

Additional reflective material fitted may replace a compulsory reflector that is fitted. If doing this, you must ensure that the standards for the compulsory reflector, such as colour, location and the standard of the reflective material, meets the requirements of the ADRs and the National Regulation.

For example, if installing additional yellow side facing reflective material along the side of a heavy vehicle, it may be possible that these reflectors also meet the ADRs and National Regulation requirements for side marker reflectors (side retro-reflector) and can replace the existing fitted compulsory reflector..

Conspicuity markings

Internationally, there are two common standards for conspicuity markings, a Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) from the United States of America and the United Nations standard (UNECE Regulation 48) that originated in Europe. In Australia, **only the United Nations standard** for conspicuity markings is accepted by the ADRs and the National Regulation.

UNECE Regulation 48 sets out the requirements for the type of reflective material that must be used for conspicuity markings, the colours that are permitted as well as how and where the material is fitted to the vehicle. To assist operators understand UNECE R48, the Australian Trucking Association (ATA) has produced a Technical advisory procedure for heavy vehicle visibility which is available from the ATA website at <http://www.truck.net.au/resource-library/heavy-vehicle-visibility-technical-advisory-procedure>

Please note: UNECE Regulation 48 should only be used in reference to the fitment of conspicuity markings.

Rear Marking Plates

The National Regulation requires all motor vehicles with a GVM over 12 tonnes and all trailers with an ATM over 10 tonnes to be fitted with rear marking plates. The NHVR recognises that the voluntary fitting of UN standard conspicuity markings comes at a notable cost and is an investment in safety by operators. As such, the NHVR will amend the National Regulation to allow operators the choice of fitting either rear marking plates or UN Standard conspicuity markings.

To provide operators with this choice immediately, the NHVR has issued a notice that exempts the requirement to fit rear marking plates to a heavy vehicle if UN standard conspicuity markings are fitted to the sides **and** rear of the vehicle.

More information about this exemption is available in the [National Heavy Vehicle Standards \(Conspicuity Marking\) Exemption Notice 2016 \(No. 1\)](#)

Please note, while rear marking plates are not required where UN standard conspicuity markings are fitted, a heavy vehicle may still need to be fitted with a 'do not overtake turning vehicle' sign under state or territory road rules. For further information about these signs, please contact your local state or territory transport authority.

Complying with the national heavy vehicle safety standards

The operator of a heavy vehicle must ensure that their vehicle complies with the *Australian Design Rules (ADRs)* and *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation*. Using or permitting another person to use a defective heavy vehicle on a road is an offence.

A defective heavy vehicle is a vehicle that:

- does not comply with the heavy vehicle safety standards; or
- has a part that does not perform its intended function; or
- has deteriorated to an extent that it cannot be reasonably relied on to perform its intended function.

Penalties can include on-the-spot fines or prosecution. Formal warnings or a defect notice may also be issued. For more information see the *Heavy vehicle defects—Compliance and enforcement bulletin* at www.nhvr.gov.au/ce-bulletins

About the NHVR

The NHVR has a dedicated Vehicle Standards team to help with modification applications and advise on any technical aspects.

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*Standard 1300 call charges apply. Please check with your phone provider

Please note: While every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy of the content of this Vehicle Standards Guide, it should not be relied upon as legal advice.



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