

HEAVY VEHICLE BRAKE RULE UPDATE

Land Transport New Zealand have advised that new safety requirements for heavy vehicle brakes came into force on March 1 this year.

The Heavy-vehicle Brakes Rule aims to improve safety for all road users by improving the performance of heavy vehicle brakes and reducing crashes on New Zealand roads involving heavy vehicles.

Brake defects are a leading factor in heavy vehicle crashes involving vehicle faults. Between 1997 and 2002 there were 77 brake-related heavy vehicle crashes on New Zealand roads, resulting in four deaths, 15 serious injuries and 34 minor injuries.

The rule requires heavy vehicles newly registered in New Zealand after 1 July 2008 to meet approved international brake standards. In practice this means heavy vehicles newly registered after that date and used in combination (i.e. towing a trailer) must be fitted with 'load-sensing valves' or antilock braking systems such as ABS or EBS. Heavy trailers newly registered in New Zealand after that date will also be required to be fitted with load sensing valves or ABS or EBS brakes, but they won't be required to comply with an approved standard.

The rule also introduces improved brake testing procedures to ensure that heavy vehicles and heavy vehicle combinations can brake safely in all conditions of loading. Vehicles will be tested in a semi-laden (partially loaded) condition, or with 'tie down' straps used to simulate loads.

Due to the time needed for Testing Stations to install the new equipment needed to carry out the improved tests, the new testing regime will be phased in over the next 18 months to two years.

Land Transport NZ National Manager Vehicle Certification Unit Alex Sms said Land Transport had worked closely with the inspection industry and heavy vehicle operators to determine the most efficient brake testing regime for New Zealand's diverse heavy vehicle fleet.

"We're committed to working with the industry and applying regulations fairly to protect all road users. The new brake tests for heavy vehicles will provide the highest degree of confidence in brake safety without causing major disruptions to Testing Stations or the heavy vehicle industry."

Mr Sms said Land Transport NZ was keen to assure operators, independent brake coders, certifiers and service providers that the introduction of the Heavy Vehicle Brakes Rule on March 1 has not brought an immediate change to the testing procedures.

"Until Testing Stations have installed the new equipment, it will be business as usual and the current brake testing procedure will continue to be used. Land Transport NZ is working together with VTNZ and other industry groups to establish a realistic timeframe and ensure a smooth

transition to the new testing procedures.”

Mr Sims said more detailed information about the implementation of the new testing procedures will be provided as these decisions are made.

More information about the Heavy-vehicle Brakes Rule and the implementation process can be found at www.landtransport.govt.nz/rules/q-and-a/heavy-vehicle-brakes-2006.html.