
Performance Based Standards - an update

NZ Transport Agency
December 2018

Q&A FOR HEAVY VEHICLE OPERATORS

What are Performance Based Standards (PBS)?

Heavy vehicles are designed and built according to standards that ensure they can be safely operated on our roads. The safety performance requirements for a “standard” heavy vehicle are contained in the Vehicle Dimensions and Mass Rule 2016 (VDAM). However, some heavy vehicle designs and combinations don’t meet the Rule’s standard vehicle criteria. Where this is the case, PBS are used to indicate whether a non-standard vehicle meets the safety performance requirements equivalent to a standard vehicle.

A PBS is intended to establish a consistent, transparent process for:

- evaluating and approving new non-standard vehicle designs (otherwise known as proforma designs), and
- considering approval of individual vehicles that are neither standard nor fit an approved configuration.

Why do we have PBS?

PBS provide assurance to the NZ Transport Agency (as New Zealand’s regulator) that any new, non-standard heavy vehicles will fit safely on our roads, and can be used on either general access or constrained routes.

Operators can use vehicles which do not meet the VDAM Rule as long as the operator has obtained permits which mean the vehicle is safe to use on our roads.

What are some of the issues with the current PBS?

New Zealand’s PBS are largely based on standards developed overseas for the local conditions – particularly in Australia. This means many of the standards are unsuitable to New Zealand’s roads as the conditions are different. For example, Australia has many long, straight stretches of maintained highway whereas New Zealand’s roads are often narrow and windy.

Concerns raised by industry about current PBS include:

- the need for clarification around when and how assessments can be undertaken for proforma vehicles,
- a lack of consistency around the assessment process, and
- lack of provision to allow bulk permitting for standardised fleets.

Concerns from a regulator perspective include:

- increased deviation from constraints in the Vehicle Dimension and Mass (VDAM) Rule,
- the need for clarification around what is a 'standard vehicle' to help compare new design proposals, and
- a lack of incentive to create improved new vehicle designs – due to the current process encouraging a proliferation of designs.

What is happening to develop new PBS?

Since 2016 there has been a small project team at the Transport Agency tasked with improving the PBS.

The team works with an industry advisory group to help develop the standards to an agreed level of safety and practicality as well as the way in which the standards will be administered.

The advisory group includes representatives from:

- Road Transport Forum
- Trailer Manufacturers Federation
- Log Transport Safety Council
- NZ Police
- Auckland Transport
- TERNZ Transport Research

When will the new PBS be developed?

In January 2018 it was planned that the new PBS would come into effect in April 2019. Some of the key targets with the advisory group include:

Target Date	Action	Completed?
March 2018	International peer review of draft PBS	✓
April 2018	Wider industry consultation via advisory group	✓
April – July 2018	Trial validation to test PBS operates in the real world in the same way as planned in the modelling	✓
August 2018 – January 2019*	First proforma trial	In progress
April 2019*	Implementation, other proforma trials will then continue under business as usual	

* These dates may still be possible though have been impacted by the review of regulatory functions currently underway. We sent a note to the advisory group earlier this month to give a heads up that there may be a slight delay.

What does this mean for the current PBS and proformas until the new ones are in place?

In the meantime, continue to submit permit applications for existing proformas. There will be a transition phase of current proformas to new proformas. During this time, new and existing proformas will both be valid.

If you have a High Productivity Motor Vehicle length permit for a vehicle, it remains valid for the life of that vehicle.

As we have noted earlier, until the new PBS and related processes are in place, the Transport Agency will be very conservative with, and unlikely to approve, any new applications for variations.

For more information contact:

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