

What is the 2026 Master Code?

The 2026 Master Code is an authoritative source of information concerning safety in heavy vehicle transport. The Code provides guidance on managing hazards, risks, risk assessments and risk controls. It is a key safety tool that helps parties in the Chain of Responsibility (CoR) meet their Primary Duty under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL).

The Code has been shaped through extensive formal and informal consultation with industry and reflects the maturity of understanding that industry has about the Primary Duty and the skills required to manage safety.

Why has the Master Code been updated?

The 2026 Master Code builds upon the 2018 Code's foundation, ensuring it remains a current and reliable source of information for managing transport risks and duties under the HVNL. The update enhances and modernises the existing content of this widely used safety resource. It builds upon the industry-wide consultation and feedback that produced the 2018 code and provides more practical information that will assist all CoR parties review and improve their practices.

Who contributed to the 2026 Master Code?

The update is the result of a collaborative process involving extensive input from a diverse range of stakeholders and industry participants. The NHVR engaged with CoR parties from across the supply chain, including off-road parties, and received feedback to ensure the updated Code is comprehensive and relevant.

How does the 2026 Master Code differ from the 2018 version?

The 2026 Master Code broadens its scope to encompass a wider range of hazards and risks by adopting an activity-based structure, whereas the 2018 Code focused on specific risk areas like speed or fatigue. The updated Code also includes content for off-road parties and other specific industry sectors that were not specifically addressed in the 2018 version.

How does the activity-based structure make the Code easier to use?

The activity-based structure organises guidance around the full range of transport activities from recruitment to vehicle procurement to premises management, rather than defined party roles. This should make it easier for users of the Code to find specific information relevant to their own practices, and to consider other opportunities they may have to improve safety.

Has the updated Code considered emerging industry issues and technology?

Yes. The 2026 Master Code contains significant content relating to developments in technology, evolving industry practices, and current regulatory expectations, as well as insights gained from recent experiences. The Code has been shaped through extensive formal and informal consultation with industry and reflects current industry practice and experience.

Will other registered industry codes be affected by this review?

No. Other registered codes will remain in place and relevant to their sectors. However, the 2026 Master Code will complement and align with them where appropriate.

Do I have to "comply" with the 2026 Master Code?

The Master Code does not create new legal obligations or replace existing HVNL requirements. It does provide comprehensive guidance to parties in the CoR but it is not a compliance manual for the HVNL or any other law.

The main purpose of the code is to assist CoR parties to manage safety. It may also be used by a court as evidence in relation to a breach of the primary duty or the executive duty. Its content may show what CoR parties and executives know, or ought to know, about hazards, risks, risk assessments and controls relevant to the safe use of heavy vehicles, which is relevant to determining what is reasonably practicable.

Will the HVNL review affect the 2026 Master Code?

No. The Master Code is targeted at requirements for fulfilling the Primary Duty and the Executive Duty. Neither of those duties is subject to change in the HVNL review process. Some anticipated changes, such as obligations around fitness to drive, were already addressed in the 2018 Master Code, and have been further enhanced in this version.

Can smaller operators benefit from the 2026 Master Code?

Absolutely. The parts of the 2026 Master Code aimed at heavy vehicle operators, are relevant to all operators, from large national fleets to small, family-run businesses. Some controls may not be reasonably practicable for smaller businesses or owner operators, but the Code includes scalable recommendations and practical examples that can be applied regardless of business size or resources.

While the Code is written mainly for businesses, employed drivers can also benefit by seeing examples of good practice, and learning what they should expect from consignors, consignees and loading managers, and what support they should receive from their employer.

Where can I get a copy of the Master Code?

The current Master Code, along with other [Registered Industry Codes of Practice](#) are available for download from the NHVR website.

For more information about the Master Code, contact the team at codes@nhvr.gov.au.

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