



Information Alert



TRAIN RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

Rail Safety (General) Clause 60A Regulation 2003

Purpose of Regulation

- To give effect to recommendations arising from both the Glenbrook and Waterfall Inquiries which identified the need to ensure inter-operability of communications equipment between all trains operating on the NSW network during an emergency situation.
- To provide consistent radio communications for trains operating on the NSW network.
- To overcome the existing limitations of the lack of integration and standardisation of train radio communications systems in NSW.

When does the Regulation commence?

1 September 2006

How has inter-operability been achieved in NSW?

Inter-operability in NSW will be achieved by the integration of MetroNet and CountryNet radio systems to expand the existing CountryNet radio system into the metropolitan area through the use of the Voice Communications System (VCS) which is installed at RailCorp's Rail Management Centre.

Therefore, during an emergency situation, the network control officer will be able to communicate simultaneously through a "broadcast call" with passenger and freight trains in the immediate vicinity of the train that initiated the emergency.

What does this mean?

This means that passenger and freight trains operating on the NSW rail network must have a radio communications system that is compatible and interoperable in an emergency situation, as well as a back up system.

What is a back-up system?

If the primary radio system fails, there must be a back-up communications system for the train.

This means:

- WB radio (450.050 MHz) or
- Mobile phone (i.e. mobile or satellite phone – appropriate for the area in which the train is operating)

What about "black spots" and coverage in tunnels and cuttings etc?

ITSRR is aware that there are some locations on the NSW Rail network where train communication services are not capable of being received or transmitted to or from an on board train communications system. These are referred to as "black spots".

Initially, ITSRR's monitoring of an operator's compliance with the new regulations will focus more generally on the operational capacity of the train communications system as a whole rather than single instances of communications incapacity caused by "black spot" locations on the network.

ITSRR is continuing to work with Track Managers to ensure that all technical barriers to achieving full network coverage of communications can be resolved.

What about track maintenance vehicles?

There has been some discussion concerning ITSRR's opinion as to whether the MetroNet and CountryNet radio communication systems should be applied to rolling stock specifically utilised for track construction, maintenance and inspection activities.

ITSRR's opinion is that track maintenance vehicles that travel between worksites as "trains" or rail vehicles should be equipped with the relevant train radio communication system for the network over which they traverse.

ITSRR recognises that the level of consultation with track maintenance vehicle operators has not occurred to the same level as passenger and freight operators. As a result, ITSRR has commenced consultation with Track Managers and service providers to obtain a better understanding of the equipment utilised on these vehicles.

Therefore, from 1 September 2006, ITSRR will be granting an exemption to all track maintenance vehicles operating on the NSW rail network until such time as consultation has been completed.

Please note that Track Managers may at their discretion include similar or additional requirements regarding the fitment of train radio equipment in their access agreements.

What about those operators who have ordered equipment and are experiencing installation difficulties?

Only those operators who responded to ITSRR by 25 August 2006 and provided a full explanation as to the reason why compliance cannot be achieved by the commencement of the regulation will be provided with an exemption until 1 December 2006.

From 1 December 2006 these operators must be fully compliant with the requirements of the regulation. ITSRR will be actively monitoring compliance with this requirement.



Carolyn Walsh
Chief Executive