

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

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Compliance audit report

Traffic management for construction or maintenance work in Queensland

July 2009

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Introduction

The *Traffic Management for Construction or Maintenance Work Code of Practice 2008* (the Code) was made on 31 July 2008. However, the Code did not commence until 1 September 2008 to provide an opportunity to raise industry awareness and understanding of the Code. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ), in conjunction with the Department of Main Roads and the Department of Transport, delivered information seminars about the Code in major centres across Queensland in August 2008 and April 2009.

Why have an audit?

WHSQ conducted an audit campaign during March, April and May of 2009 in response to concerns that industry were not applying the Code. The audit campaign consisted of 49 random audits across Queensland to assess the extent of uptake of the Code.

What was audited?

A broad cross section of workplaces were audited in the construction and maintenance sub-sectors.

The audit was based on the major components of the Code and comprised two parts. The first part was a desktop audit of:

- construction work documentation
- traffic plan documentation
- compliance with sections of the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices: Part Three Work on Roads 2003* (MUTCD) identified in section 4.5 of the code
- traffic controller documentation
- employer management of fatigue, and
- record keeping.

The second part of the audit involved of a walk through assessment of risks associated with:

- traffic controller activities
- fatigue, and
- general hazards.

Inspectors were also asked to assess the performance of a particular workplace against industry performance using the audit criteria as a benchmark. The workplaces were rated as below average, average or above average with a rating of average indicating the workplace was managed in a safe way.

How was the audit conducted?

The desktop audit involved reviewing documents identified by the Code and the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008* (the Regulation). The audit tool was developed to assess compliance with sections two to seven of the Code and the relevant sections of part 20 of the Regulation.

The walk through audit was designed to verify the implementation of policies and procedures identified during the desktop audit, assess general hazards and survey workers about their hours of work and breaks between shifts.

Audit results

A total of 49 workplaces were audited resulting in nine verbal directions and the issuing of three prohibition notices and two improvement notices. Construction workplaces accounted for 77 per cent of the workplaces audited with compliance rates for construction documentation between 83 per cent and 97 per cent. However, two improvement notices were issued for work method statements not being available.

Approved traffic plans were available for 95 per cent of static sites, 84 per cent of low impact sites and 74 per cent of mobile works. Compliance regarding record keeping ranged between 72 per cent and 82 per cent.

Figures one and two below summarise levels of compliance associated with documentation requirements. Figure three relates to the walk through audit and details levels of compliance for the placement of traffic signs and taking rest breaks.

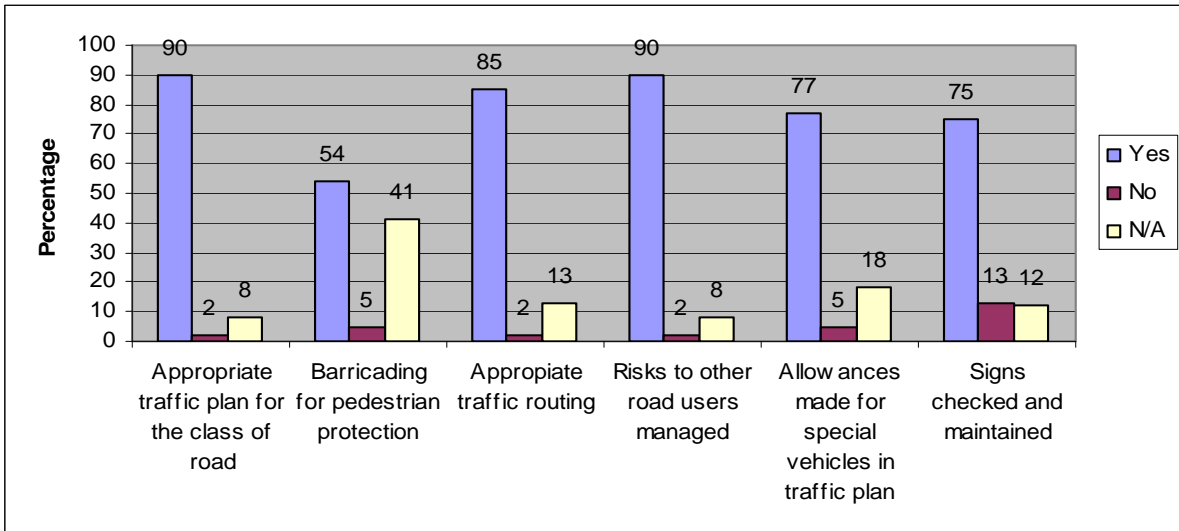


Figure One – compliance with specific traffic plan elements of the MUTCD.

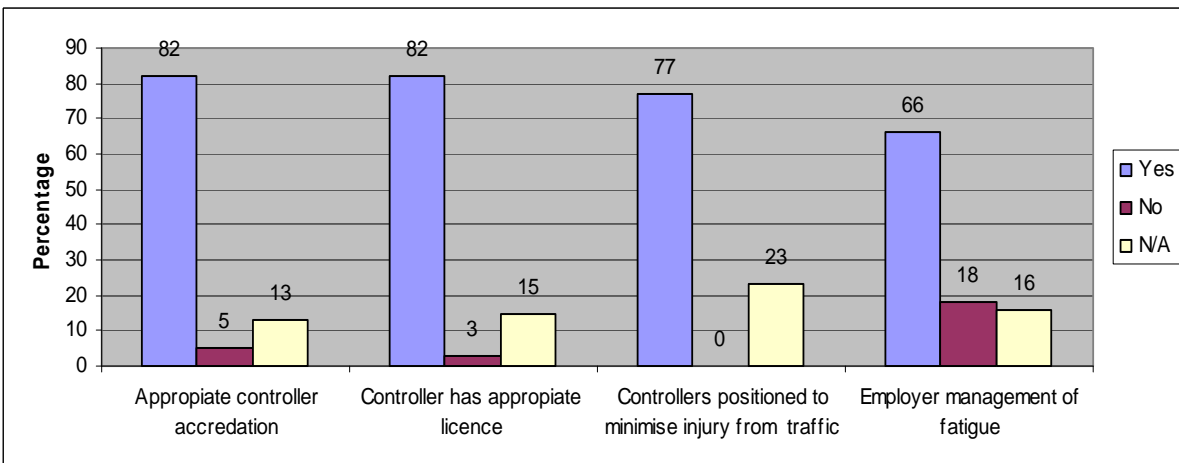


Figure two – document compliance relating to traffic controllers and fatigue management.

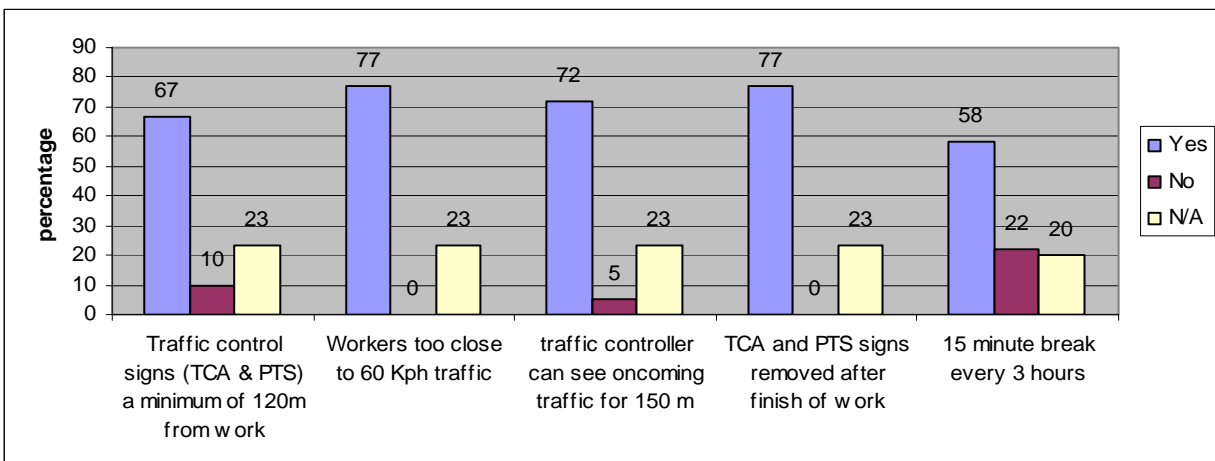


Figure three – walk through audit findings, traffic controller risk management.

The column titled “15 minute break every 3 hours” in figure three has a “not applicable (N/A)” component of 20 per cent. This can be attributed to maintenance and mobile work as this work does not usually require traffic controllers to control traffic for long periods of time without a break meaning the three hour limit would not normally be reached.

The following verbal directions were issued:

Issue	Number of verbal directions
Signs being left out when work not in progress	1
Loading of trucks without a traffic controller	1
Warning signs less than 120 metres from workers	3
No safety pin on excavator quick hitch	1
Plant too close to 60 Kph zone	1
Sign on wrong side of lane	1
Filling a barricade with gravel ballast	1

A prohibition notice was issued where work was being carried out without stop and go signs to control traffic. The other prohibition notices were issued for signs not complying with the traffic control plan and the MUTCD.

The survey for work times indicated that the maximum hours of combined work and travel to and from work was 12 hours with the average being 9.5 hours. The average time between shifts was 13.3 hours with the shortest break being 11 hours.

Figure four details the findings for the general hazards assessment “Yes” indicating that risks were identified and minimised.

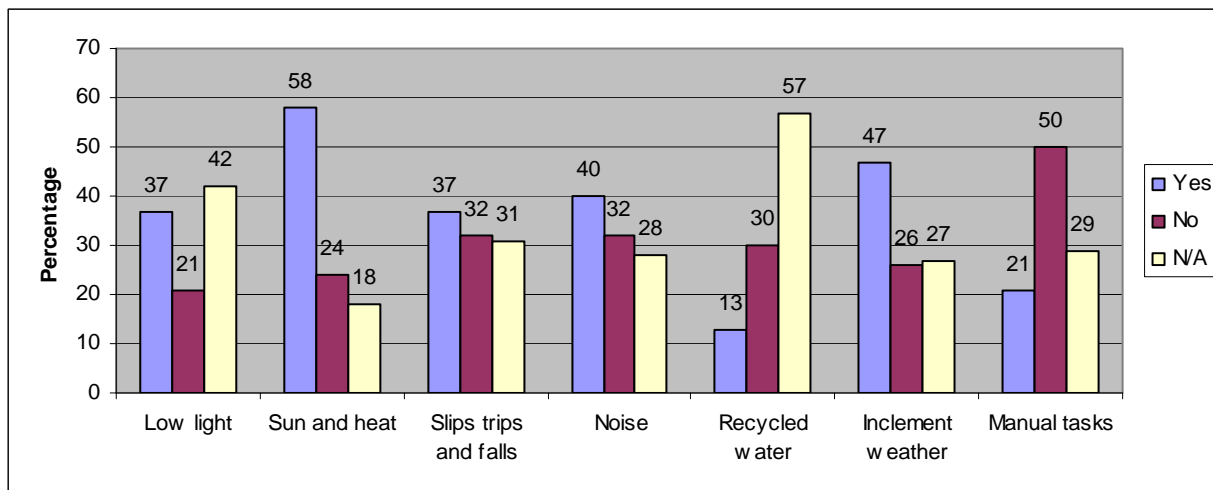


Figure 4 – general hazards

The assessment of industry performance by inspectors resulted in 64 per cent of sites managed in a safe way (average) with a further 21 per cent performing at a higher level of safety.

Discussion

Audit results indicate that this industry sample was aware of the Code and has made considerable progress in implementing the Code.

There was generally a high level of compliance relating to having the appropriate documentation at the work site. However two issues of concern relating to documentation were identified:

1. traffic control plans were not available for 25 per cent of mobile works sites, and
2. fatigue management, as documentation was not available for 18 per cent of the audited workplaces.

Analysis of the verbal directions and the prohibition notices issued during the walk through audit identified a failure to place signs in accordance with the traffic plan and the MUTCD as the predominant issue of concern.

The walk through audit findings suggested that industry should take further action to manage risks associated with the environmental factors of light, heat, inclement weather and noise.

The hours of work survey results indicated that hours worked were consistent with the WHSQ publication *Managing fatigue – a guide for the workplace, 2008*. However, it was identified further measures are required to ensure traffic controllers receive a rest break of 15 minutes every three hours as required by section 3.2.14 of the *Traffic Controller Accreditation Scheme Approved Procedure 2007*.

Where to from here?

The audit concluded a relatively high uptake of the Code. However it did identify the need for improvements of:

- worker's placement of signs in accordance with the traffic plan
- supervision of the placement of signs to ensure risks to workers and members of the public are minimised
- ways to further reduce risks associated with environmental factors of light, sun, heat, noise and inclement weather, and
- management of fatigue risks through adequate rest breaks.

The recent release of the Queensland Workplace Rights' Ombudsman's report into the *Contract Traffic Control Industry* and the decision to establish a taskforce to further the findings and recommendations of the Ombudsman provides an opportunity to consider further initiatives to improve safety in the industry.

Further information

Download the [Traffic Management for Construction or Maintenance Work Code of Practice 2008](#).

Further information regarding the placement of traffic management signs can be found in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices: Part Three Work on Roads 2003* and the *Traffic Controller Accreditation Scheme Approved Procedure 2007* <http://www.mainroads.qld.gov.au>

Further information on fatigue management relating to hours of work can be found in [Managing fatigue – a guide for the workplace 2008](#).

Download the Workplace Rights Ombudsman's report into the [contract traffic control industry](#).

As with any research, these findings represent only what was found at the time the workplace visits occurred and are only relevant to the industries visited.

For further information visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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