



WHO IS RESPONSIBLE WHEN YOU ARE OVERWEIGHT?

We're all used to seeing stories in the media about the importance of losing weight. But 'weight loss' takes on a whole new meaning if you work with fleet vehicles, where carrying too many kilos has become a significant legal minefield. Fleet vehicles must abide by strict state and federal regulations around GVM (Gross Vehicle Mass) for the sake of occupant safety and efficient conduct of duties; yet light vehicles are regularly overloaded – either through ignorance of the laws, or nonchalance about the impacts.

Under recent national legislative changes – commonly referred to as Chain of Responsibility (CoR) - everyone who influences the day to day usage of a fleet may be liable in the event of a breach. That “she'll be right mate” attitude simply won't cut it if you are found responsible for serious misuse of a vehicle or, worse still, serious injury of a workmate or member of the public.

So, how much do you know about weight management? And how can you be more responsible about deploying a safe, compliant and job-ready fleet?
Weight management

Carrying heavy loads is just part of the job for drivers across Australia's industrial sectors. It's vital, however, that drivers, fleet managers and anyone in vehicle sales or modification has a solid understanding of just how heavy is too heavy. Overweight vehicles have a bigger risk of rollover, increased brake, tyre and suspension component wear and decreased efficiency in handling and stability. Driving under these conditions is obviously a safety risk, but also exposes everyone in the chain of responsibility to serious legal repercussions if something goes wrong. Any person or party in breach of weight regulations can face fines into the millions, or even jail sentences of up to 20 years.

CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY

CoR is shorthand for the Road Transport Reform (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill that has been enacted across all Australian state and territory jurisdictions. The 'chain'

takes the heat off drivers as being the sole persons responsible in the case of OHS breaches resulting in a vehicle accident or injury. It acknowledges a duty of care at all levels of operation, including off road parties, from drivers to loaders, schedulers, consignors and even company directors.

But whilst all parties in the chain have a responsibility to ensure that legislative requirements are not compromised, in reality it seems fleet owners and operators often still lack the legal and technical knowledge to safely operate a vehicle within appropriate limits. It's never been more important for managers to implement education programs to ensure risk management is part of transportation processes, from the selection of fleet vehicles through to day to day operations.

THE PROBLEM WITH COMPLIANCE

Fleet vehicle owners and operators are exposed to legal and operator safety risks when a vehicle's GVM and Allowable Payload capacity is exceeded. This can be due to a range of factors, including confusion around weight guides provided by the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) and non-compliant modifications like added bull bars and tool boxes. Vehicle selection is another critical factor, with fleets often chosen on

the basis of resale value rather than as a result of risk assessments or detailed task requirement analysis.

Added to this confusion is a dizzying list of state and federal codes, standards and regulations, written in their own special brand of legal-ese that can sometimes feel as though they have little to do with the actual job at hand. But with companies and executives already facing potential fines up to \$20 million dollars since the implementation of CoR, it pays to invest in legal guidance, education for workers and expert consultation when it comes to vehicle selection and modification.

HOW MINECORP CAN HELP

One way to get a head start on compliance and weight management across your fleet is to ensure you work with fleet fit-out specialists who understand CoR. When adding after-market accessories to a fleet vehicle, for example, the modifier must ensure they comply with federal and state conditions, mine site or work site requirements, and road going rules and regulations for the journey needs of your vehicles. As industry insiders, Minecorp can explain the legislation that affects you when you have your vehicles modified and assist you to understand your responsibilities.



➤ To assist you with your 'weight management' problems; get in touch with **Minecorp** - call **1300 922 881** and visit **www.minecorp.com.au**.