

Zero BAC requirement for all heavy vehicle drivers

The Government is taking further steps to minimise the risks to heavy vehicle drivers, their passengers and other road users, by extending the zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) requirement to all drivers of heavy vehicles.

The new zero BAC statutory requirement for all heavy vehicle drivers will commence on 1 April 2021.

Previously the zero BAC requirement only applied to drivers of 'larger vehicles' – vehicles with a GVM greater than 15 tonnes. From 1 April 2021, the zero BAC requirement will apply to drivers of all heavy vehicles which are defined as vehicles with a Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) greater than 4.5 tonnes.

At a BAC of .05, the risk of being involved in a road crash is about double compared with a BAC of zero. Studies show some drivers can be impaired from as little as 0.02 BAC.

Crashes involving heavy vehicles are often serious because of their significant size and weight, regardless of who is at fault.

Heavy vehicles are more difficult to operate compared to a regular passenger vehicle. Their size and weight make driving and manoeuvring around turns more challenging, slowing down and stopping more time-consuming, and loss of control easier, but harder to recover from.

Driving is a complex task requiring concentration, judgement and decision making. Alcohol affects these skills and decreases a driver's ability to safely control their vehicle.

Alcohol is a depressant, so it slows messages to and from the brain, impacting upon decision-making, slowing reaction time and reducing overall vigilance.

What will the penalties be for a truck driver who is over zero when the new law comes into effect?

Drivers face [harsh penalties](#) if they are caught drink-driving

The penalties will be the same as those that currently apply to drivers based on their licence and legal limit. The penalty will differ depending on the BAC reading and other factors, but all offences will incur loss of licence, a mandatory behaviour change program and an alcohol interlock.

Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) resources for the road transport industry

The Department of Transport, in close consultation with the transport industry, has developed an Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) policy resource kit to support heavy vehicle operators to establish and implement best practice management of alcohol and other drugs. The resource kit is designed to support these organisations with content that is customised to their business needs, as well as supporting managers and supervisors to develop and apply policies and procedures.

The AOD resource will benefit all heavy vehicle operators, especially small to medium sized companies who are keen to apply best practice approaches to managing alcohol and other drugs, but may not have the capacity to develop the required resources and supporting material.

For more information

The Alcohol and Other Drugs policy builder is a free online resource, which can be accessed through the VicRoads website at vicroads.vic.gov.au/aodpolicy.