



HEAVY VEHICLE SERVICING

INFORMATION

November 2016

USING SAFETY CHAINS ON HEAVY TRAILERS

Some operators have begun fitting safety chains between their heavy trucks and trailers to provide an additional safety backup between the primary coupling and the breakaway brake function. Safety chains allow a driver to bring a trailer to a controlled stop in the event of primary coupling failure, provided these guidelines are met.

The Transport Agency reiterates that it is still comfortable with the current practice of using a primary coupling and breakaway brake.

However, for operators who want an additional level of safety, the installation of safety chains is a safe and legal option. The following guidelines must be followed otherwise there is risk of not being able to bring a trailer to a controlled stop.

Guidelines

The fitting and use of safety chains is acceptable, provided that:

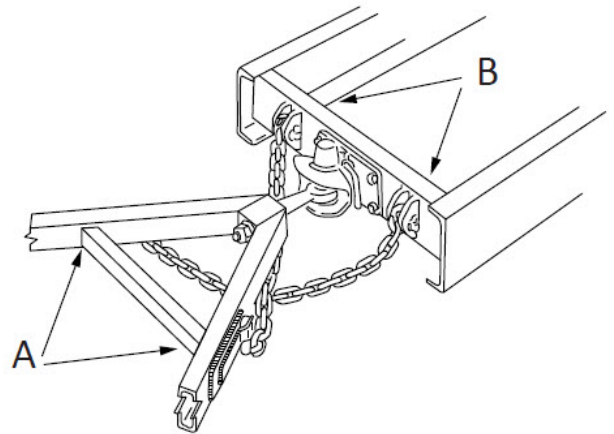
- breakaway brake function is maintained in case of failure of both the primary coupling and chains, and
- the requirements in the **Australian National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual, Section 3 Couplings** are followed, using the actual modification date instead of manufactured date regarding chain sizing in Table 3.2, and
- modifications to drawbeams and drawbars must follow NZS 5446, requiring certification and an LT400 from a heavy vehicle specialist certifier, and
- the chains' length is no longer than the minimum required to prevent binding under maximum coupling articulation, and
- drivers must be provided with adequate training to ensure chains are only used properly, and
- after a vehicle connection or inspection, the driver is responsible for reconnecting the coupling, ensuring that the chains are crossed and properly connected, and
- fittings and chains are maintained in safe condition.

Additional notes

- As the fitting of safety chains and their attachments is optional, not fitting them isn't a reason for CoF rejection, but all modifications to drawbeams or drawbars require an LT400.
- Safety chains are best suited for dedicated combinations because shackles aren't permitted to compensate for mismatched attachment points and chain length.

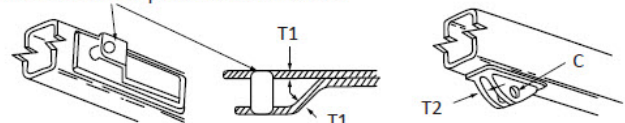


Safety chains fitted

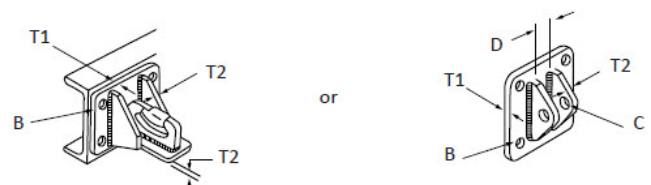


A. To the trailer

Pin welded to prevent chain loss



B. To the towing vehicle



Typical attachment of chains
(image courtesy of National Heavy Vehicle Regulator)

Further information

For more information, contact Technical Services - Vehicles team of the NZ Transport Agency at vehicles@nzta.govt.nz.