
Questions and answers: Safety alert: Towing connections certified by Dick Joyce identification RJJ

NZ Transport Agency

August 2018

Background

Issues have been identified in drawbeam, drawbar and towbar certifications by Dick Joyce (RJJ). Independent reviews have identified that some were not adequately designed for the loads to which they had been certified or have been recertified beyond their viable design life. Dick Joyce's authorisation as a heavy vehicle specialist certifier was suspended as a result of concerns identified through our audits. Subsequent investigations have identified further issues with towing connection certifications he has issued.

We are still investigating towing connections certified by Dick Joyce (RJJ). In the meantime, we recommend all owners and operators follow the recommendations in the [Safety Alert](#) published in August 2018.

How many vehicles are affected, and where are they regionally located?

Our records show 483 vehicles are affected and over 50% of them are located in the Wairarapa and Wellington regions.

What type of vehicles are they?

The vehicles affected are all heavy vehicles with towing connections (towbars, drawbars and drawbeams). This includes vehicles such as motorhomes, heavy haulage trucks, logging trailers, buses and coaches.

Are there enough certifiers to do these inspections?

There are 83 'HVET' certifiers across the country. At this stage certifier inspections are only required if signs of failure are visible. The Transport Agency is working with the Heavy Vehicle Engineers Group (HVE) to ensure certifiers are available if demand increases in particular locations.

What kind of assistance are you providing to vehicle owners affected by this action?

Contact details for assistance from the Transport Agency are available at the bottom of this page. The Transport Agency will also be making direct contact with operators who have the highest number of affected vehicles to see what assistance they may require.

The Transport Agency approved Dick Joyce's authority as a certifier – don't you have a responsibility to put this right?

The Transport Agency became aware of the quality of Dick Joyce's certifications during a regular scheduled audit in May 2017. Following the results of this audit process and an unsatisfactory outcome from an action plan put in place for Dick Joyce, he was subsequently suspended as a heavy vehicle specialist certifier in June 2018.

The Transport Agency acted responsibly by suspending Dick Joyce when we were no longer satisfied that he was operating in a way that met required standards.

Will the Transport Agency be paying for RJJ towing connection inspections and any subsequent replacements and recertifications?

The Transport Agency isn't legally liable to do so. At this stage we are considering our options and have yet to make a decision regarding payment responsibility. Under consumer law, the first recourse in relation to costs rests with the supplier.

Will the Transport Agency be paying the owners for loss of income while vehicles are off the road getting sorted if cracks/damage is found on a RJJ certified towing connection?

The Transport Agency will not be paying for loss of income. We recommend operators talk to their insurance provider or seek independent legal advice about options that are available to them.

I have a component (eg log bolster, fifth wheel, skid plate, crane mount, etc.) certified by Dick Joyce (RJJ) and it has cracks. What should I do?

The Transport Agency recommends that you stop using the vehicle. At a minimum, you must stop using the component in the meantime. You should document the failure as much as possible, including the vehicle's registration, certification (LT400) number, photos, date of certification, etc. and send it to info@nzta.govt.nz with RJJ and the vehicle's registration plate number in the subject line. Then arrange for the component to be inspected by a heavy vehicle specialist certifier.

The full list of heavy vehicle specialist certifiers is available at www.nzta.govt.nz/heavy-vehicle-specialist-certifiers. Alternatively, liaise with the engineering workshop you normally use, who will have a certifier they can use.

I have had my towing connection removed or permanently disabled – what do I need to do?

If your vehicle has had its towing connection removed or permanently made inoperable, please let the Transport Agency know by phone 0800 699 000 or by email info@nzta.govt.nz so we can ensure a note is added to the vehicle's file. Please note that removing the towball or tow coupling only is not sufficient to render it inoperable.

What is the difference between a drawbeam, a towbar and a drawbar?

A **towbar** is fitted to a heavy vehicle (truck, bus, campervan etc) and is used to tow a light vehicle (usually a trailer but may be another light vehicle such as a car). A light vehicle is one with a GVM no greater than 3,500kg.

A **drawbeam** is fitted to a heavy vehicle (e.g. a truck) and is used to tow a heavy trailer. A heavy vehicle, which includes trailers, is one with a Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) exceeding 3,500kg.

A **drawbar** is fitted to a heavy trailer with a GVM exceeding 3,500kg.

Who can I contact at the Transport Agency to discuss this further?

If you would like to discuss this further, we recommend you follow up with an email to info@nzta.govt.nz with *RJJ* and your vehicle's registration plate number in the subject line.