
Questions and answers: Safety alert: Skid plate failures on refrigerated semi-trailers

NZ Transport Agency

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Q) What other semi-trailers are affected?

A) While the on-road failure occurred with a refrigerated MaxiTRANS trailer and we are aware of structural cracks found on other refrigerated MaxiTRANS trailers, any semi-trailer can have a failure. However, those without the ability to visually inspect the skidplate structure are most susceptible to unforeseen failures. These can include refrigerated trailers, tankers, bulk transporters, etc.

Q) Why should I pay more attention starting at 300,000kms?

A) The Transport Agency recommends inspections with a borescope at every servicing, but cracks may not appear until the skid plate has been through many load cycles, which may not occur until after the semi-trailer has been in service for several hundred thousand kilometres.

Q) Isn't this picked up by a CoF inspector?

A) Vehicle testing stations do not separate the semi-trailer from the truck and do not have borescopes for internal inspection. Even if they did separate the semi-trailer from the truck, the thick layer of grease used between the semi-trailer's skidplate and the truck's fifth wheel would make an inspection difficult. Therefore, the onus is on the operator to have skilled personnel clean and inspect the semi-trailer's skidplate to ensure it is still within safe tolerance.

Q) What do I do if I find a failure?

A) Do not use the semi-trailer. Contact the semi-trailer's manufacturer or a heavy vehicle specialist certifier. A list of heavy vehicle specialist certifiers (HVSCs) is available on our website. For towing connections, find one in your area that has 'HVET' authorisation. The direct link to the list is here: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/heavy-vehicle-specialist-certifiers/docs/heavy-vehicle-specialist-certifiers-list.pdf>

Alternatively, liaise with the engineering workshop you normally use, who will have a certifier they can use.

Q) What if I do nothing?

A) The Agency highly recommends a thorough cleaning and inspection of the skidplate and its internal structure. Doing nothing is not advisable and may cause a crash from your semi-trailer separating.

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

A) If you would like to discuss this further, we recommend you follow up with an email to info@nzta.govt.nz, including your contact and vehicle details in the email