

SAFETY ALERT

Loss of vehicle control – loose, damaged and broken wheel studs and nuts.



The last few months have seen a number of incidents where DEWNR employees have been put at risk due to the failure of wheel studs or nuts on the vehicles they were driving. In a number of instances the wheel assembly has separated from the axle and resulted in a serious loss of control and the vehicle leaving the road.

Clearly the loss of control of any vehicle is a very dangerous occurrence with the potential to cause serious injury or even death to both workers and other road users.

Investigations of these incidents indicate a number of factors may be in play. In a number of instances the vehicles were 4WD and fitted with alloy rims. The recent changing or replacement of the wheel assembly also appears to be another associated factor.



It appears that in a number of instances there has been some warning to the occupants of the

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imminent failure; as the studs and/or wheel nuts loosen there is a knocking noise from the wheel assembly as the rim 'wobbles' on the hub and drivers may feel a weaving sensation.

Forthwith, staff and managers must adhere to the following requirements when driving any DEWNR vehicles.

1. The driver must ensure that prior to using a vehicle a walk around visual inspection of the vehicle is made and particular care is taken to check that all wheel studs and nuts are present with no obvious signs of damage or loosening.
2. The Safe Driving Procedure requires (at a minimum) a monthly 'comprehensive' vehicle inspection is completed. When completing the inspection wheel studs and nuts are to be checked with a suitable tool to ensure they are tight and in serviceable condition. A [revised checklist](#) is now available for this purpose.
3. Additional care must be taken after a tyre is changed. If you change a tyre ensure that the instructions contained in the vehicle manual are followed including cleaning all mating surfaces to reduce the risk of loosening. Following servicing and or wheel/tyre repair, re-check the wheel nuts and studs after driving short distance; generally 20 to 100 metres will suffice to ensure the rim has seated correctly but the interval will depend on the conditions and use. This information and requirement should be conveyed to any subsequent drivers of the vehicle to ensure it occurs.
4. When driving be alert to changes in the vehicles handling or unusual noises emanating from the vehicle these could be an indicator of a loose wheel or other problems. If detected pull over promptly when safe to do so and investigate the cause.

This information is generic in nature as there are a range of vehicles in DEWNR use and operational conditions vary greatly. Drivers and responsible Managers should understand the level and nature of the risk they face and implement local procedures and processes that meet their requirements while ensuring they meet the mandatory requirements set out in this Alert and the [DEWNR Safe Driving Procedure](#).

Should you have any questions please contact the Workplace Safety and Wellbeing Unit.

Prepared by: Peter Bercys, Snr Safety Projects Officer

Authorised by: David Wearing, Manager Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

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