

Australian Standard™

**Guidelines for railway safety  
investigation**



**S t a n d a r d s** Australia

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The following interests are represented on Committee ME-079:

Association of Railway Preservation Groups  
Australasian Railway Association  
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services  
Department of Infrastructure (Victoria)  
Institution of Engineers Australia  
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## **Guidelines for railway safety investigation**

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## PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee ME-079, Railway Safety in response to a need by the railway industry for a uniform procedure for conducting investigations of occurrences.

This Standard harmonizes with *Report on independent investigation and open reporting of rail occurrences* prepared by the Rail Group of the Australian Transport Council and endorsed by the Council on 30 April 1999.

The term 'informative' has been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An 'informative' appendix is only for information and guidance.

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## FOREWORD

The procedure recommended in this document for investigating an occurrence has as its primary objective the enhancement of safety through the discovery of any systemic problems and deficiencies which may have led to the occurrence, or any latent safety issues the investigation might reveal. As such, it needs to be clearly differentiated from other kinds of investigation that might arise from the same occurrence, such as police, OHS authority and coronial investigations, which may result in the apportioning of blame or establishment of liability. It is important that in order to meet the kind of objective set out above, the procedure is based on a 'no-blame' approach. The use of investigative techniques based on this approach has demonstrated that if the threat of sanctions or criticism against individuals or organizations is removed from the procedure, the investigation will proceed in a minimum stress environment and is more likely to get to the truth of the matter and to uncover underlying safety or other deficiencies in the system.

Two particular aspects are important in achieving this end. Firstly, the procedure envisages that a measure of confidentiality in relation to the participants giving evidence will be maintained such that, although records of the names of people involved are kept, they would not be referred to in the final report, except by their generic position in the organization if that were necessary. The second important aspect is that the investigator would not be required to make any statements of blame or offer prescriptive solutions in the final report. The report would show factual information, analyses and conclusions together with a listing of safety actions (see Clause 1.5.6) which have been addressed or which need to be brought to the attention of the responsible authority, and would leave the determination of remedial action to others.

Despite the foregoing, users of the procedure should be aware that the contents of the report may be drawn upon by police, coronial or other authority investigators. The degree to which the information can be used in those types of investigation will depend on the amount of legal protection available in the particular jurisdiction.

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SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL

### 1.1 SCOPE

This Standard gives guidelines for investigating the contributing factors to railway safety occurrences so as to enable subsequent corrective action to be taken to manage the safety risk and to prevent a recurrence. The guidelines cover the setting of terms of reference, conduct of the investigation, the development of conclusions, the identification of safety actions and the presentation of reports. The Standard does **not** address the determination of remedial action or formulating prescriptive solutions arising from a report.

NOTE: It is not intended to inhibit emergency reporting during the investigation, of a safety issue requiring urgent attention, even though this might imply a recommendation that remedial action be taken.

### 1.2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of these guidelines is to provide the railway industry with a consistent approach to initiating, conducting and reporting on an investigation into a railway occurrence with a view to identifying safety deficiencies.

### 1.3 APPLICATION

The procedures given in these guidelines are believed to have wide application throughout the railway industry. This does not, however, imply that they will necessarily be optimal for every individual occurrence or for all organizations. Whilst they provide an approach which is applicable to a high proportion of investigations, they also provide an opportunity for those considering alternative procedures to compare the relative merits of those alternatives.

### 1.4 REFERENCED DOCUMENT

The following document is referred to in this Standard:

AS  
4292          Railway safety management  
4292.1        Part 1: General and interstate requirements

### 1.5 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Standard the definitions in AS 4292.1 and the following apply:

#### 1.5.1 Evidence

Facts elicited from all sources in the course of an investigation including those obtained via formal statements or testimony, and those obtained by informal means.