What should I look for in safety management system software?

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Look for software that fits how your business actually works, that your drivers will use on a phone, and that keeps records you can find quickly at an audit. Software can make your SMS easier to run, but it doesn't make you compliant - your SMS only works if it is used every day.

Questions to ask before you buy

Ask Why it matters

Is it built for heavy vehicles? A general WHS app may not cover fatigue, work diaries, daily checks, faults, mass and load restraint.

Does it cover all five areas of the SMS Standard 2026? Leadership, risk, people, assurance and safety systems - not just a stack of forms.

Will your drivers use it? It needs to work on a phone, with simple screens, and offline where coverage is poor.

Does it tell you what's due? Reviews, services, licences, medicals and inductions should come to you, not rely on memory.

Can you find records fast? An auditor or officer may ask for a driver, truck or date. You should be able to pull it up and export it.

How long does it keep records? Most safety records need keeping for at least 3 years, with a trail of who changed what.

Who owns your data? Where it is stored, who can see it, and whether you can take it with you if you leave.

Does it work with what you use? Your EWD, accounting software or spreadsheets - or will you be typing things in twice?

What does it really cost? Per truck or per user, set-up fees, and what is extra.

Software doesn't make you compliant

The NHVR says an SMS is working when it is consistently used in practice and achieving its intended safety outcomes. An auditor looks for evidence your system works, not a login.

Watch out for

- Claims that software is "NHVR approved" or guarantees compliance. The NHVR approves electronic work diaries, not SMS software.
- Templates you can't change to match how you actually work.
- Paying for features built for big fleets that you will never use.
- Systems that only the office uses - if drivers don't use it, it isn't working.

Full disclosure

RigsHQ makes safety management software for small operators. Use this checklist on any product, including ours.

General information, not legal advice.

Sources

NHVR - Safety management FAQs - https://www.nhvr.gov.au/safety-accreditation-compliance/safety-management/faqs

NHVR - HVA scheme operator guideline 2026 - https://wws.nhvr.gov.au/files/media/document/925/202607-1778-hva-scheme-operator-guidelines.pdf

NHVR - Safety Management Systems (SMS) - https://www.nhvr.gov.au/safety-accreditation-compliance/safety-management-systems