What is General Safety Accreditation (GSA)?

Accreditation - checked 7 Nov 2026

General Safety Accreditation (GSA) is independent proof that your business is managing its safety risks. An NHVR-approved auditor checks that your safety management system meets the SMS Standard 2026 and is actually working. It is the base of the new Heavy Vehicle Accreditation scheme, and you need it for GSA-MAP, ACA-Fatigue or ACA-Mass.

Proof you manage your safety risks

Under the Heavy Vehicle National Law, everyone in the chain of responsibility must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the safety of their transport activities. Most operators say they do. GSA is how you prove it - an independent auditor has checked your system and confirmed it is working.

The NHVR says accreditation helps operators show that safety is key to the way they run their business. The benefits can include:

- more confidence from customers and supply chain partners
- stronger safety performance
- better governance and accountability
- more consistency across your operation

GSA is voluntary

You don't need GSA to operate. Without it, you still have the same safety duty - you just don't have independent proof that you are meeting it.

What the auditor checks

The auditor looks at how you manage safety across your whole business - fatigue, loading, maintenance and the rest - against the five areas of the SMS Standard 2026: leadership and commitment, risk management, people, assurance, and safety systems.

It's not a paperwork check. The auditor rates each part of your system against four tests:

Test	What it means
Present	It exists and is written down
Suitable	It fits the size and risks of your business
Operating	It is used every day
Effective	It is actually making your operation safer

How the audits work

Audit When What the auditor wants to see

Entry audit When you apply Your SMS is present and suitable

Initial compliance audit 6-7 months after accreditation is first granted Your SMS is operating and effective

Compliance audit (to keep your accreditation) Between 9 months and 1 month before your accreditation expires Your SMS is still working - you need a pass, or your corrective actions closed, to renew

The initial compliance audit can be waived if your entry audit shows the system is already working - including at least 6 months of evidence and no major non-conformances. It can't be waived after a desktop entry audit. If you add an ACA within 5 months, the initial compliance audit moves to 10-11 months.

Between audits

- Internal review - you must review your own SMS at least once a year. The NHVR can ask to see it at any time.
- Triggered audits - the NHVR can order an audit after an on-road breach, a serious crash, a complaint or other information.
- Spot checks - the NHVR also checks operators' systems and auditors' reports at random.

Accreditation is usually granted for 2 years, and up to 3.

What GSA lets you add

- GSA-MAP - no annual registration inspection in Queensland and New South Wales.
- ACA-Fatigue - work and rest hours that suit your business, within outer limits.
- ACA-Mass - Higher Mass Limits, PBS and some notices and permits.

Apply together

You can apply for GSA and the tiers you need at the same time, which can save on audits.

General information, not legal advice.

Sources

NHVR - About the HVA scheme - https://www.nhvr.gov.au/safety-accreditation-compliance/heavy-vehicle-accreditation-scheme/about-the-hva-scheme

NHVR - HVA scheme tiers - https://www.nhvr.gov.au/safety-accreditation-compliance/heavy-vehicle-accreditation-scheme/about-the-hva-scheme/hva-scheme-tiers

NHVR - HVA scheme audits -

https://www.nhvr.gov.au/safety-accreditation-compliance/heavy-vehicle-accreditation-scheme/about-the-hva-scheme/hva-scheme-audits