

SAFETY ALERT

Mandatory Standard — Motor Vehicle Recovery Straps

Purpose

This safety alert informs motor sport stakeholders including, officials, competitors, pit/service crews and suppliers/retailers of the mandatory standard for motor vehicle recovery straps which was declared on the 7th of July 2010 and has come into effect on the 1st October 2010.

Background

At least two fatalities and one serious injury have occurred in Queensland since 2003 as a result of unsafe use of recovery straps.

The mandatory standard requires that motor vehicles recovery straps, manufactured or imported after the 1st October 2010 (and all recovery straps supplied after the 1st January 2011) carry prominent labeling and warning to promote safe usage of the product.

The mandatory standard applies to anyone in the business of selling snatch straps including manufacturers, importers distributors, retailers and hirers.

A vehicle recovery strap is designed for attaching to a bogged vehicle to tow it clear of the bogged situation. It is also more commonly known as a 'snatch strap'. These may be used by 'recovery' vehicles at motor sport events. The standard does not apply to vehicle straps, wire cable, chain, rope or straps for conventional towing situations, lifting slings or tie down straps.



What are the Hazards

- Tow hooks can become sheared from vehicles and recoil at force if straps are incorrectly attached to tow bars or tow hooks.
- If vehicle recovery strap is not rated for the weight of the vehicle it is attached to, it can break and both the strap and the tow hook can release with great force injuring persons and damaging both the vehicle and equipment.

Recommendations for Users

- People intending to use the strap should consider obtaining comprehensive advice through training or contact with a four wheel drive club
- Ensure the strap is not damaged and is in useable condition
- Continually assess the straps "s strength and stretch" this can be reduced when saturated with water
- An object such as a recovery damper, heavy bag or blanket must be draped over the strap during its use to reduce any unintentional rebound of the strap
- Whilst the strap is being used, people outside who are involved in the recovery process must:
 - stay a safe distance from the motor vehicle and in accordance with directions of an event official, recommended at least 1.5 times the un-stretched strap away from the vehicle, and
 - never stand in the path of either vehicles.
- Only use the strap with proper robust recovery points. The force of the strap is likely to break or snap off normal attachment points such as:

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- tie-down eyes
- towbars
- bull bars
- suspension components

Information for Suppliers — (Suppliers must not rely on this information as a complete guide to compliance)

- There is a legal responsibility for ensuring the vehicle straps supplied meets the mandatory requirements enforceable by law.
- It is an offence under the Trade Practices Act (consumer Product Safety Standard) (Motor Vehicle Recovery Straps) Regulations 2010 to supply motor vehicle recovery straps that do not comply with the mandatory standards. Failure to comply can result in legal action, penalties and recalls.

Information for Retailers — (Retailers must not rely on this information as a complete guide to compliance)

- If you are a retailer you are responsible for ensuring that the products supplied meet mandatory safety standards. To ensure the mandatory standard, a retailer should:
 - stipulate that any vehicle recovery straps ordered must meet the mandatory standard, and
 - undertake visual checks of delivered stock where possible to check compliance with the requirements of the mandatory standard.

To Assist in Purchasing a Strap

- The packaging for a motor vehicle snatch straps must display information about the strap in English and in a way that is clearly legible
- The information should include:
 - brand name or suppliers logo;
 - name and contact details of the Australian manufacturer, importer, distributor;
 - minimum breaking strength expressed in metric units, and
 - a recommendation that the minimum breaking strength should be between two and three times the vehicles gross vehicle mass.
- The following warning (below) must appear on the information permanently fixed to the vehicle recovery strap, and with the printed instructions — which must be supplied with the strap.

WARNING — Always follow product instructions. It is important to correctly attach the motor vehicle recovery strap to a motor vehicle. A standard tow ball or vehicle tie-down point is not designed for this purpose and may result in the strap or a vehicle component detaching from a motor vehicle and striking and seriously injuring or killing a person. Only attach the strap to a vehicle recovery point or device that is suitably rated for use with the strap. Incorrect use has previously resulted in serious injury and death.

For more information please refer to:

Motor Vehicle Recovery Straps – Supplier Guide

<http://www.productsafety.gov.pdf>

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission—Vehicle Accessories — Motor Vehicle Recovery Straps

<http://www.productsafety.gov.au/content/index.phtml>

Trade Practices (Consumer Product Safety Standard) (Motor Vehicle Recovery Straps) Regulations 2010

<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation>

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