



SAFETY CIRCULAR 04/2022

File: D27876

March 2023

USE OF AUTOMATIC RETARDER FUNCTION IN DFES VEHICLES AND DRIVER BEHAVIOUR

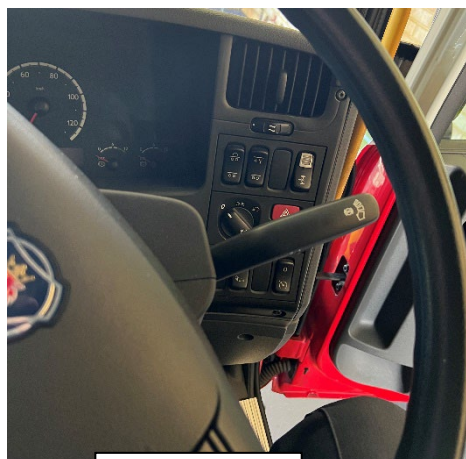
Key Message

The retarder (RET) is an auxiliary brake and brakes the driving wheels when activated. Where an automatic RET is fitted to DFES vehicles, drivers are required to ensure they are familiar with the type, operation and function of the RET (including its limitations) and **are not** to use the RET in slippery conditions.

There is an expectation and requirement of all personnel to ensure that they drive DFES vehicles to the road, traffic, and environmental conditions and in accordance with the *Road Traffic Code 2000*.

What happened?

An investigation into a recent incident where a driver lost control of a DFES fire appliance, resulting in the vehicle rolling over on a wet and slippery roadway, identified that the automatic RET was on and set to its maximum setting. The automatic RET activated when the driver backed off the accelerator causing the rear driving wheels to aquaplane on the wet and slippery road surface. The activation of the automatic RET, combined with the slippery condition of the road surface, and the driver of the vehicle not driving to the road and environmental conditions being experienced at the time, was identified as the main contributing factors of the driver losing control of the vehicle.



Wand Type RET



Button Type RET

Target Audience: All DFES				
A	B	C	D	Vol
O.I.C. is to communicate content to all relevant personnel under their command, discuss implications, and sign appropriate box above. Once completed Circulars shall be filed on station and forwarded to Information Resources at the end of each financial year.				
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What do I need to do?

Drivers of DFES vehicles fitted with an automatic RET are to review the retarder section of the relevant vehicle driver/operator instruction and training manuals and ensure they understand the function, use and limitations of the RET.

Drivers are to identify and confirm if a 'wand' type or 'wet/dry button' type automatic RET is fitted to the vehicle.

When driving DFES vehicles under both 'normal' and 'emergency' conditions, drivers are required to comply with [SOP 3.3.12 Driving Standards](#) and ensure they drive vehicles to the road, traffic, and environmental conditions and in accordance with the *Road Traffic Code 2000*.

What else is happening?

Where a DFES vehicle is fitted with a RET, a visual warning sticker will be fitted that states:

"WARNING: Do not use RET in slippery conditions"

DFES will also be amending vehicle driver training products to improve organisational knowledge, understanding and competency of the retarder function and its use in DFES vehicles.

Further information

For further information contact DO Matt Folini via email matt.folini@dfes.wa.gov.au.

CRAIG WATERS AFSM
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OPERATIONS

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