

The Heritage Steam Code of Practice Update 1/08

Welcome

The Steam Management Committee (SMC) of the National Historical Machinery Association welcomes all heritage steam owners and operators to our first update for 2008. One of the challenges we face is keeping people informed on progress so please spread the word including club newsletters, notice boards and the like. Club editors are encouraged and welcome to include the Updates in club newsletters.

Updates also appear in The Old Machinery Magazine and on the TOMM web site (Steam Section) at <http://www.tomm.com.au/> and will also appear on the newly established NHMA web site at <http://www.nhma.com.au/index.htm>

This issue includes a 'frequently asked questions' segment. This will be a regular feature or at least until all questions get answered! The ones in this issue relate to the area of change and in the next update we will cover how the Code will operate.

Please take the time to read and digest the information as rumours, innuendo, and misinformation do nothing for anybody and in particular for the small team that is volunteering their time to write the Code for you and those that follow you.

Background

The concept for a Heritage Steam Code of Practice was first mentioned in The Old Machine Magazine in the Steaming Along the Road column in 2002. This was discussed again in 2005 when The Office of the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) sought comment from Industry on a proposed High Risk Work Standard that intended to introduce, among other things, five year licences for the operation of certain types of equipment including boilers and steam engines.

There was widespread concern in the heritage road steam community on the proposal, particularly for young people trying to gain steam qualifications, and this led to support for the development of a Code of Practice. A small volunteer committee formed, and in December 2005 a paper was sent to The Office of the ASCC arguing the case for a Heritage Steam Codes of Practice.

The Office of the ASCC gave approval in May 2006 for the development of a Code of Practice as a National document. This was a significant outcome and signifies the first occasion that Government has agreed to work with industry to prepare a National Code. It also means that the States and Territories will also be involved with its issue.

Purpose

The purpose of the Heritage Steam Code of Practice is to provide a basis for the generational transfer of skills and knowledge so that heritage steam may continue to operate as we know it, and provide a basis for self regulation.

Progress

- In April 2006 the NHMA, after a vote, agreed to the concept of establishing a Steam Management Committee (SMC) provided the government approved a Code

of Practice. This association represents historic machinery and equipment clubs throughout Australia, and has approximately 9000 members.

- In August 06, with support from The Office of the ASCC, eight members of the inaugural steam committee met in Adelaide and held a two day workshop to further develop the Code. This also included a discussion with members of the Licensing Technical Group Committee.
- Following the meeting a team under Mr Kevin Lord was established to write Training Modules. To date 15 draft modules have been produced covering the operation of the locomotive type boiler and steam plant such as traction engines.
- In July 2007 the SMC, comprising four positions, was established as an NHMA specialist group to administer and control the Heritage Steam Code of Practice.
- A register of non-rail heritage steam operators has been established and as of August 07 approximately 260 people have indicated their support for the Code.
- The SMC is in communication with the Association of Tourist and Heritage Railways of Australia (ATHRA), the UK based National Traction Engine Trust (NTET), and maritime heritage steam operators.

Underlying this is the sound relationship that has been developed with government where our case has been heard and supported. This is a major achievement and advice is that the new Federal Government is positive to the need for Industry Codes.

The Process of Change

For most of the twentieth century in Australia, steam operators were able to operate under a qualification system that meant a 'ticket for life' where the training was generally related to the type of boiler and engine. Advice on the standard of the boiler was based on the comments from the boiler inspector at the annual inspection.

As such, most heritage steam operators could enjoy their hobby, did not need to be a united group, as they were catered for by government. This is no longer the case as responsibility now rests with the owner and/or operator. The tickets for life have gone and there is a dire shortage of boiler inspectors who have sound knowledge on heritage steam boilers.

These changes have occurred over the last two decades and relate to significant changes in the way Government Occupational Health and Safety organisations operate including major changes in legislation, the procedures they use and how risk and responsibility is assigned.

With few exceptions most training and assessment procedures, along with qualifications are developed for Industry through a consultative process between the various industries and government. As industries evolve including updated and more automated equipment so does the training and qualifications.

This has meant that 'heritage steam equipment' that is 'locked in time' has essentially been overlooked by governments. Hence training and qualification procedures for Industry equipment such as boilers will become less relevant for heritage steam trainees as the trend will continue toward automation of operation. This can produce a potentially dangerous situation as a heritage steam boiler operation relies on the continuous attendance and vigilance of the operator who must have sound knowledge

on this type of plant that will not be gained by completing OH&S training courses on boilers or reciprocating engines.

Some heritage steam people consider this to be an advantage and take it to mean that they are exempt from compliance; do not need operator qualifications, and boiler inspections are not required, regardless of where the steam plant is operated. This is not the case.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is all of this needed?

The skills and knowledge in Government and industry for operator training and assessment along with boiler inspections of heritage steam plant has all but gone. If we don't become involved we face a very uncertain future.

What is a Code of Practice?

A document that is taken to be the current state of knowledge about a particular issue, and approved under legislation. It is not mandatory to comply with a Code of Practice; however, a Code can be used as evidence in legal proceedings.

If it is not mandatory to comply with a Code and I am not in a workplace why should I bother?

The simple answer is for your own well being and others around you. There are also legal reasons noting that a person who has not complied with an approved Code will be taken to have failed to exercise the required standard of care unless they can prove otherwise.

This means that an individual who chose not to use an approved Code would have to develop their procedures including documentation before the event and would then face the time and significant expense of proving 'otherwise' in Court.

A Code implies self-regulation therefore I will be able to inspect my boiler and issue a certificate?

No - self regulation does not mean 'do as you please' but means that you are following and complying with an endorsed set of procedures such as a Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice will cover boiler inspection but inspection by first parties (ie owners or operators) on their boiler will not be allowed.

The intent is that the Code will provide a basis, including insurance cover, for people in the heritage steam community, who have the competencies, skill and knowledge, to inspect and certify heritage steam boilers.

Even if you never take your boiler out in a public area, self inspection and certification is potentially dangerous and is not recommended practice.

The National Traction Engine Trust in the UK has just published their Code of Practice on their website. Why can't we just use their one and not re-invent the wheel?

The SMC and NTET are in communication with each other and the NTET has most kindly offered their help. However, Australian legislation in regard to operation of boilers, steam engines, and Codes of Practice is different to the UK and therefore the Australian Code will differ that produced by the NTET.

An important outcome is that an Australian Steam Association is communicating with an overseas body and this is a first at the national level.

What will the Australian Heritage Steam Code of Practice cover?

The Code, to be issued as a national document in partnership with government, will include administrative procedures, training, assessment and qualification, boiler inspections, maintenance, repairs and construction, and audit procedures.

What is the purpose of the Steam Management Committee and who is on it?

The purpose of the SMC is to administer and control the Code of Practice. The four committee positions are Chair (Bob Buttrims), Register Secretary (Ron Jackson), Treasurer (Kevin Lord) and Technical Director of the Code of Practice (Gary Barker).

Why do we need representation with government?

The simple answer is for our own well being. One of the outcomes of the formation of the SMC and its recognition by government is that we are being consulted. One of the changes in OH&S procedures is that industries are advised of changes and not individuals. An example was the need to changeover from the 'paper' tickets to the national class of qualifications which was required to be completed in a designated timeframe after which the original ticket became null and void. This was advised to the Heritage Steam community through the Updates. Recent advice from government is that there will be further change this year including a review of boiler qualifications.

Unity is critical as is the passage of information and that is why the Register of Supporters for the Heritage Steam Code of Practice was set up. If you would like to register contact Ron Jackson at ron.jackson@bigpond.com. You are welcome to also contact the committee members or ring Gary Barker on 02 6268 8327 (bh).

If you change your email or home address please let Ron know in advance so that we can continue to keep you informed.

NHMA Steam Management Committee
22 January 2008