

Bus door interlocking and bus braking

A report was made by a State Transit Authority (STA) bus driver who said that he was involved in a near collision with another STA bus which had braked suddenly in front of him without any brake lights being displayed. He was able to bring his bus to a stop without incident but was concerned when he found that the reason that the bus ahead had braked suddenly was that a malfunction had caused its doors to open which had automatically activated the brakes. He was very concerned that a bus could be travelling at speed in traffic and the brakes suddenly activate without any brake lights indicating that it was doing so.

CSIRS Requirement

As part of the OTSI investigation, a Safety Valve Notification was issued to the STA asking them to investigate whether bus brake lights are activated in the event of braking initiated by the doors opening during running and to provide OTSI with the results of its findings and any proposed remedial safety actions deemed necessary.

Investigation outcome

The STA conducted a functional review of the door safety system for the entire STA bus fleet and confirmed that the concerns raised by the reporter were valid for some of the older buses in its fleet. It found the operation of the door safety system and the activation of the brake lights varied between the different bus types in its fleet. For example in the older Mercedes buses it found that when a door was pushed open the brakes would activate without the brake lights also activating, however in the newer Volvo buses the brakes and the brake lights would always activate together. However STA stated that all buses complied with the Australian Design Rules relating to the interlock brake mechanism and the activation of brake lights but nevertheless was moving to bring its older bus fleet towards the same standard as the newer bus fleet.

OTSI Action

A copy of this summary report has been passed to the Ministry of Transport. OTSI has also advised the reporter of the response provided by the responsible operator.

The outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and the responsible operator have been recorded in the OTSI Safety Investigation Database for future review and trend analysis.