

BRIEFING

Review of the road cones digital hotline pilot		
Date:	18 November 2025	Tracker #: 251215
Security:	In Confidence	

ACTION SOUGHT

Minister	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Brooke van Velden Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety	Note the information in this briefing Agree to discontinue the road cones digital hotline by 19 December	25 November 2025

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Position	Telephone	Contact
Sharon Thompson	Chief Executive	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]	✓
Helen Ward	Director, Strategy Implementation	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]	–

CONSULTATION

Comments:

PURPOSE

To provide you with advice on our review of the road cone digital hotline pilot, outline the benefits delivered and to seek your agreement to discontinue the hotline by 19 December 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

WorkSafe recommends that you:

a. **note** the information on our review of the road cone digital hotline pilot

noted

b. **agree** to discontinue the hotline by 19 December 2025

agree / disagree

c. **agree** WorkSafe should continue to support wider system efforts towards greater adoption of the new risk-based traffic management guidance through inspectorate engagement, joint education activities with the New Zealand Transport Agency, and participation on the TTM Industry Steering Group

agree / disagree



Sharon Thompson
Chief Executive
WorkSafe New Zealand

Hon Brooke van Velden
**Minister for Workplace Relations
and Safety**

18/11/2025

..... / / 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. At your direction, and following feedback from the public, WorkSafe established a road cone digital hotline pilot this year, to address public concerns about the overuse of road cones on New Zealand roads.
2. The original duration for the pilot was 12 months from 3 June 2025. The pilot was established within baseline and designed to be cost-effective.
3. WorkSafe's review of the pilot at the end of October (after five months of operation) found that the pilot's overall objectives had been achieved. We had also observed a steady decline in notifications to the hotline.
4. WorkSafe recommends an early closure of the hotline, by 19 December 2025.
5. A key finding of our review is there is a difference between public perceptions of excessive road cone use and what is found and assessed on site. The pilot showed that the cause of the public's concern is not technical 'overcompliance' by sites, but the variable adoption of the 2023 *New Zealand Guide to Temporary Traffic Management* (NZGTTM or risk-based guidance) by road controlling authorities (RCAs). Traffic management plans (TMPs) are still being designed and approved against the more prescriptive 2000 *Code of Practice for Temporary Traffic Management* (the Code). Uptake of the new guidance will see a more proportionate level of TTM on New Zealand roads.
6. We consider the best way for WorkSafe to continue to contribute to the government's aims for reduced TTM is through our inspector engagement and education as part of their normal assessment visits to PCBUs, and working alongside New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and the TTM Industry Steering Group to increase the uptake of the new TTM risk-based guidance through RCA education and engagement.
7. Ongoing engagement with PCBUs, NZTA and RCAs will also help to maintain clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of WorkSafe and others in relation to TTM.
8. Lessons from running the hotline will inform our Feedback Systems programme, which aims to improve the public's experience of interacting with WorkSafe.
9. These activities and approaches are contributing to the shift in WorkSafe's culture you articulated in your Letter of Expectations.

BACKGROUND TO THE ROAD CONE DIGITAL HOTLINE PILOT

10. On 31 March 2025, you announced that WorkSafe would establish a hotline, providing a means for the New Zealand public to notify instances of perceived excessive or unjustified use of road cones. This initiative was part of a wider suite of health and safety reforms announced, resulting from feedback received during your 2024 roadshows and public consultation.
11. Feedback highlighted concern that the overuse of road cones was leading to public desensitisation to their intended safety purpose. The declining trust in safety signals potentially posed an increased risk to both workers and road users. There was also frustration at the rigidity of TTM requirements, which were frequently seen as disproportionate to the actual risk involved.

12. Feedback also emphasised stakeholder confusion about who is responsible for what in relation to TTM, and a perceived lack of clarity between the operation of health and safety legislation and the NZTA TTM guidance within the transport sector.
13. Fear of WorkSafe prosecution was a recurring theme. This was somewhat unexpected as TTM on public roads hasn't featured significantly in prosecutions.¹ Despite this, some stakeholders felt they could not take a more risk-based approach (as recommended by NZTA), as that may lead to a reduction in TTM, and they were concerned WorkSafe could take action against them.
14. Your objectives for the hotline were for it to:
 - provide the public with a feedback mechanism for road cone or other TTM overuse
 - identify the causes of the public's concern about excessive TTM to influence a reduction in road cones
 - clarify the role of WorkSafe and the work health and safety legislation in relation to TTM
 - catalyse key shifts within WorkSafe to improve the public's perception of the regulator, namely:
 - rebalance the focus of inspector activities to engage 'early and well' to assist and support businesses and individuals with clear and consistent guidance on how to meet their work health and safety duties (one of your expectations for WorkSafe this year)
 - improve its ability to receive and respond to feedback.
15. The pilot would also support a wider government drive for increased uptake of the NZGTTM (and, potentially, a resulting lowering of TTM costs).

ABOUT THE HOTLINE PILOT

16. WorkSafe launched the road cone digital hotline pilot on 3 June 2025. There were two key areas of focus: operations and analysis.

Operations

17. In running the pilot, we:
 - received and managed notifications to the hotline – verifying, triaging, and forwarding valid notifications to the relevant road controlling authority (for public roads) and NZTA (for state highways), who would determine the response required
 - put 176 WorkSafe inspectors and 26 staff from other roles (as relevant) through training on TTM (between May and September 2025)
 - integrated TTM into inspector assessment visits, principally targeting the manufacturing and construction sectors, where there is greater likelihood of TTM on public roads. Inspectorate activity has centred on taking an engagement and education approach to ensure that businesses are aware of NZGTTM and the

¹ WorkSafe filed charges 18 months ago in respect of one matter that is still active. Charges were withdrawn in 2022 in respect of another matter, following agreement to accept an Enforceable Undertaking. In both of these cases, TTM was not a significant part of the case.

- intersection with HSWA, to ensure over-compliance is not driven by a misunderstanding of HSWA requirements
- sent WorkSafe inspectors with RCAs on shared 23 “ride-alongs” to TTM sites² to present a united front in encouraging users of TTM to follow the NZTA’s new risk-based guidance
- worked with the NZTA and the TTM Industry Steering Group to run a series of focused engagement/education sessions regionally to encourage greater adoption of the new guidance.³

18. A WorkSafe representative has joined the TTM Industry Steering Group to ensure ongoing connection to wider TTM work.

Analysis

- WorkSafe was unable to predict the volume of notifications at the commencement of the pilot. We anticipated a high level of public, media and political interest in the pilot, so we closely monitored the notifications numbers over time. We verified and published the notifications data first daily, then weekly.
- In July, we implemented a monthly impact questionnaire to all RCAs with notifications that month, seeking information about their response to the notifications and what happened as a result. This was so we could better understand the impact of the hotline. The findings of those questionnaires are summarised below under “What we learned from the pilot”.

A note on costs and resourcing

- The pilot was established within baseline and designed to be cost-effective, with the hotline being a simple online form on the WorkSafe website.
- We initially hired two full-time contractors to support the processing and triaging of notifications and the day-to-day operation of the hotline pilot. In August, in response to declining notifications numbers, we reduced the number of contractors down to one FTE. The pilot is further supported by a project team of three full-time staff, who also manage other projects across WorkSafe.
- WorkSafe originally allocated a budget of \$395,000 for the 12-month pilot. An estimate of costs to December indicates actual expenditure on the pilot will be lower. As at 30 September 2025, WorkSafe had spent \$148,545 excl. GST on costs associated with the road cone hotline pilot. This includes website development, training of WorkSafe inspectors, and the cost of the contractors. We can provide you with a full account of the costs of the hotline at its conclusion.

² With Auckland Transport, NZTA, Wellington City Council, Christchurch City Council, Taupo, Tauranga City Council and the Western Bay of Plenty District Council. Interest for shared ride-alongs has also been signalled in New Plymouth, Napier and Hastings.

³ Six one-day events were held in the Christchurch, Otago, Hawke’s Bay, Manawatu, Taranaki, and the wider Waikato/Taupo, regions. A session for Wellington/Kapiti region is planned for 24 November 2025.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE PILOT

24. Using our notifications data and the RCA monthly questionnaire, and some wider contextual information, we can make some observations about TTM compliance.

Notifications data

25. Between 3 June and 31 October 2025, WorkSafe received over 1100 valid notifications. A significant proportion of these were within the first month. While WorkSafe experienced an initial peak of notifications as the pilot began, notification numbers have decreased steadily with a recent average of around 15 notifications each week.

26. The data suggests that most complaints have come from larger urban RCAs, highlighting that the volume of perceived excessive TTM notifications are tied more to larger density population areas and where there is a greater volume of roading activity. In recent weeks, the notifications have primarily come from the Auckland region.

RCA monthly questionnaire responses

27. The results across the July to September RCA questionnaires show that:

- RCAs are visiting and following up on notifications received via the hotline. Visits to 250 sites have been reported to WorkSafe as at 31 October 2025
- most sites visited and assessed (77%) were found to be compliant with the contractor-prepared and RCA-agreed traffic management plan (TMP)
- a smaller proportion (23%) were found to be non-compliant with the contractor-prepared and RCA-agreed TMP
- excessive use of road cones was found at 6% of the sites visited. Where found, these were addressed (removed).

28. These results highlight a difference between public perceptions of overcompliance and what is found and assessed on site.

29. The solution to ensure a more proportionate approach to road cone use is the adoption of the new risk-based guidance, rather than the prescriptive code. The new guidance will improve public confidence that the number of road cones is proportionate to the risk involved.

30. The uptake of the new guidance is variable across RCAs, and we understand there can be a significant time lag (of many months) between approval of traffic management plans and the work starting. This means that even where councils have now adopted the new guidance and have begun rollout, they may not have been used for current projects that the public are raising concerns about.

31. This difference between adoption and rollout means it's not possible to know whether where the public have raised concern, those sites are using the old or new guidance. We are however confident that the adoption of the new guidance will ensure a proportionate approach the public can have confidence in.

32. For context, a February 2025 survey by NZTA found variable adoption to the new guidance with:

- 16% of RCAs have started applying NZGTTM to some of their contracts (this includes some of the larger RCAs who were early adopters such as Auckland Transport and Christchurch City Council)

- 25% plan to adopt it by December 2025
- 16% plan to adopt it by December 2026
- 43% have not yet set a date for adoption.

OUR PERFORMANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE PILOT

33. The table below sets out how WorkSafe did against the five key objectives for the hotline pilot, and what we anticipate would continue beyond the pilot:

Pilot objectives	Achieved	Ongoing	Comment
Provide the public with a feedback mechanism for road cone overuse	Yes	No	WorkSafe received and processed over 1100 notifications in total, prompting 250 site visits by RCAs. Notification levels have dropped to ~15 per week. The WorkSafe website can re-direct future road cone notifiers to the relevant RCAs.
Identify the causes of the public's concern about excessive TTM to influence a reduction in road cones	Yes	No	<p>Only 6% of sites were assessed as over-compliant against their approved TMP, so we are confident the public concern is more one of perception than fact.</p> <p>The reduction in notification numbers, and the concentration of recent notifications primarily in large urban centres, suggests responsibility for managing the public's concerns doesn't need a central hotline, but best sits with individual RCAs.</p> <p>However, WorkSafe could issue messaging that explains that the pilot found that the majority of the TTM the New Zealand public is seeing has been approved by RCAs.</p>
Clarify the role of WorkSafe and HSWA in relation to TTM and NZTA	Yes	Yes	<p>It had become apparent that WorkSafe needed to be more active and visible to clear up any misconceptions about its role and responsibility in relation to TTM. TTM training and joint site visits by WorkSafe and the RCAs/NZTA have achieved this. It has also brought greater clarity for our inspectors. Feedback has been positive with the joint visits providing onsite risk management education to visited TTM contractors. Some of the RCAs believe these joint visits are causing TTM sites to talk among themselves and self-correct their TTM approach. There is an ongoing educative role for WorkSafe inspectors in relation to TTM as part of BAU assessment visits.</p>
Shift inspector focus from enforcement to engagement and education	Yes	Yes	<p>This shift of focus is to be integrated across all inspector activity, in line with your expectations, and not limited to TTM. The training inspectors received at the beginning of the pilot will continue to support this engagement</p>

Improve WorkSafe's ability to receive and respond to feedback	Yes	Yes	The pilot has prompted a wider review of all our feedback channels (Feedback Systems programme). This work will be delivered in stages over the next 12 months.
Support wider government drive for increased uptake of NZTA's 2023 risk-based guidance	Yes	Yes	Inspectors can promote the new TTM guidance to PCBUs, as relevant to their workplace, as part of BAU assessments.

34. In addition to achieving the objectives of the pilot as outlined in the previous section, the following benefits have been identified:

- WorkSafe now has a closer working relationship with NZTA, and we have established good relationships with individual RCAs.
- WorkSafe is now a member of the TTM Industry Steering Group, so we can remain connected to the wider TTM issues and support the promotion of the NZGTTM.
- We have gained valuable insights about the benefits of having efficient triage processes, providing timely responses to notifiers, and maintaining strong feedback loops with key stakeholders. These insights are informing our Feedback Systems programme and our digital experience design work, which will help to improve the public's experience of engaging with WorkSafe and our responsiveness.
- The online form used for the hotline will not be repurposed, but the lessons are shaping our feedback systems work and the pilot has been a catalyst for culture change around responsiveness to feedback.
- The pilot has demonstrated the value of sharing insights with inspectors to support more responsive regulatory practice and to inform targeted education and engagement. It has created a process for our inspectors to learn and apply new knowledge and approaches quickly and effectively.

FUTURE OF THE ROAD CONE HOTLINE PILOT

35. The steady decline in hotline notifications (down to around 15 per week) and the high levels of compliance with TMPs (77%) suggest that road cone hotline is no longer needed. The pilot was originally intended to run for 12 months, but five months in, we consider it has achieved what it set out to do.

36. WorkSafe recommends that the digital hotline be discontinued. We propose closing down the online form by 19 December 2025. This timing aligns with the NZTA deadline for RCAs to submit their plans for transitioning to using the new guidance.

37. If you agree to discontinue the hotline, we will encourage the public to continue to send complaints or concerns directly to RCAs or NZTA. We recognise that the summer months can see an increase in road works, which might prompt an increase in notifications. However, this can be managed by having clear information on our website about how the public can contact the relevant RCA or NZTA in relation to any concerns about excessive TTM. This will allow RCAs to directly address any future concerns.

38. WorkSafe inspectors will retain a focus on TTM engagement and education as part of their BAU assessment activities, including promoting the adoption of the NZGTTM.

39. WorkSafe would continue to be an active member of the TTM Industry Steering Group and work closely with members and NZTA to accelerate the adoption of the new risk-based guidance. This would include continuing to engage with stakeholders in the system, such as RCAs and contractors, to ensure that any previous perceptions or 'fear of WorkSafe prosecution' are not a barrier to the adoption of the risk-based approach.
40. We will continue to integrate lessons learned from the pilot into our operations and work programme. An early closure of the pilot would allow WorkSafe to redeploy resources to other priority delivery areas sooner, such as the Feedback Systems work noted above.

NEXT STEPS

41. You are due to meet with WorkSafe officials on Tuesday 25 November, with the future of the pilot an agenda item.
42. If you agree to discontinue the hotline, we will work with your office to develop lines/Q&A for any public announcement you might wish to make and share our proposed communications approach.