



Counterfeit concerns

There are few parts as safety-critical on a vehicle as the steering wheel and steering wheel boss kit.

Yet, despite this many people seem prepared to spend as little as possible in this area, preferring to risk their own safety, and the safety of others to save money. This is of particular concern to LVVTA due to the increasing number of automotive components being produced in countries with sub-standard or non-existent quality control processes, and where good quality components are being counterfeited without attention being paid to the specific materials or manufacturing processes required. As New Zealand has no control over what automotive components can be imported and sold, a common-sense approach should be taken to safety critical items. That, however, is made harder when counterfeit components are being sold for prices that would make purchasers believe they are buying the genuine item.

The VIRM states that certification is not required when a replacement steering wheel is fitted to:

“a vehicle that does not have an airbag installed as OE, and is a

– a direct substitute without shaft modification, and

– a non-OE item of a reputable brand or an OE item from another vehicle.”

This, of course, means that WoF inspectors are required to know the brand of a steering component before they can assess its suitability, as well as confirm that the vehicle was not fitted with a steering wheel airbag. With most boss kits not being branded, and the increasing number of counterfeit components in circulation, this puts WoF inspectors in a difficult position. We suggest, if in doubt, you seek technical support from MTA, your NZTA Certification officer or LVVTA.

Quick Release Adaptors

One item that is sometimes overlooked during WoF inspections is quick release steering wheel adaptors. While boss kits are specifically mentioned in the VIRM, quick release adaptors are not, so must be rejected. These are often extremely cheap quality and LVVTA and are aware of failures. Even for LVV Certification purposes, removable, or quick-release steering wheels are not recommended for road use, and can only be certified where the design of the vehicle makes a quick-release steering wheel necessary for easing entry and exit (e.g rollcaged motorsport vehicles or with disability transportation modifications).

Often these unsafe quick release adaptors are also welded (and the welds disguised). LVV requirements state that no safety-critical part of a steering system may be welded, unless the welded section is the vehicle manufacturer's unmodified original equipment, so these are a definite 'no go'.

There are a number of other designs of quick release adaptors, such as the non-compliant slim-line style that may easily go undetected during WoF inspection, with only a small push-button being visible.

In Summary

LVVTA recommend that AVIs are vigilant with their inspection of vehicles fitted with aftermarket steering wheels, and as per the wording of the VIRM, they seek confirmation that items are from a reputable brand of manufacturer. This warning also extends to counterfeit steering wheels, which LVVTA have also investigated the quality of, and found that not only were the materials substandard on all items they assessed, the techniques used to produce them are also questionable. Some examples these are even delivered from their country of origin in boxes wearing genuine logos. As such, Quick release adaptors should be rejected and the vehicles referred for certification.



These Epman Racing-branded quick release adaptors cost just \$12.94, from a Chinese website, but may re-sell here in New Zealand for up to \$200. These are unsafe and cannot be LVV Certified.