

# Procurement audit of operational and safety equipment for motorways

Federal Roads Office

## Key facts

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Operating and safety equipment is electromechanical equipment required for the safe operation of cantonal roads and motorways on open stretches, as well as in tunnels. In 2021, the Federal Roads Office (FEDRO) made 698 procurements of operating and safety equipment worth around CHF 235 million. 603 of these procurements were awarded directly and had a volume of approximately CHF 76 million.

At FEDRO's Branch 3 in Zofingen, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined whether market access is guaranteed for all suppliers and how economic efficiency considerations are taken into account during purchasing. In addition, it assessed whether purchasing risks are managed effectively.

Overall, the audit findings were positive. The SFAO found that the Branch 3 case studies it audited did not show any deficiencies in procurement, that market access is guaranteed for all suppliers and that purchasing risks are managed effectively. The SFAO sees room for improvement with regard to economic efficiency and risk considerations that affect the FEDRO head office.

### **Economic efficiency considerations: potential savings must be clarified**

In 2016, at the request of the FEDRO tunnel research working group, the "LeanTech in road tunnels" report was produced. The aim of the report was to reduce both facility and operating costs for road tunnels by streamlining the specifications without compromising on safety, availability or maintenance. FEDRO is currently examining whether and how the recommendations from the report can be implemented.

FEDRO publishes the standards for operating and safety equipment (directives, guidelines, documentation and a technical manual) on its website. In addition to these standards, the territorial units responsible for operation also have their own specifications. The SFAO found no evidence that Branch 3 purchases "luxury solutions". However, due to the specifications of the territorial units, very high-quality and high-priced incidentals are sometimes used. There are indications that greater standardisation of the specifications for the territorial units could lead to savings.

The SFAO therefore recommends that, when clarifying whether simplifications from the "LeanTech in road tunnels" report should be implemented, it should also be investigated whether certain territorial units' specifications can be standardised.

## **Risk assessment: overview of critical operating and safety equipment components not yet available**

With regard to the security of supply, different challenges have emerged in recent years. In the past, many products could be delivered "just in time". Large-scale stockpiling was therefore often seen as outdated and too expensive. Due to COVID-19 and the current Ukraine crisis, the situation has changed to some extent. Some suppliers can no longer make deliveries or have very long lead times. This results in a lack of spare parts for some critical operating and safety equipment components. In order to avoid being caught out by a shortage or even complete lack of the smallest components for the operating and safety equipment systems, it is important to contact the relevant suppliers in advance. The relevant components should be identified in the same way throughout Switzerland in order to be able to gather important information about them. The operating and safety equipment application currently being developed can serve as a tool for this.

The SFAO recommends examining how the information on the operating and safety equipment sub-systems can be supplemented with information on the critical components in the new operating and safety equipment application. Once the critical components have been identified, the availability of spare parts can be reported and managed accordingly.

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