NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
WAKA KOTAHI

Correct as at 15th May 2026. It may be superseded at any time.

Extract taken from: Light vehicle repair certification > Technical bulletins > Threshold for requiring repair certification

4 Threshold for requiring repair certification

The following information gives guidance to vehicle inspectors in determining when a light vehicle (including motorcycles and mopeds) undergoing entry certification in New Zealand requires specialist inspection by a repair certifier (Note 1).

Important: If the vehicle documentation (eg a registration document or invoice) contains the words ‘statutory’, 'written off', (Note 5) ‘write-off’, ‘salvage’, ‘junked’ or ‘non-repairable’ the vehicle **must** be referred to a specialist repair certifier.

Applicable legislation

- **Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Repair 1998**.

A repair to a vehicle (including its structure, systems, components or equipment) must restore the damage or wear to within safe tolerance of its state when manufactured or modified.

Criteria for reporting structural damage or corrosion

The criteria detailed below must be used when deciding if any damage or corrosion should be referred to a repair certifier.All damage meeting this criteria and found in the energy management path areas must be reported.

The important distinction when applying these criteria is:

- Whether the area identified as damaged by impact, previous repair, or corrosion is structural or cosmetic, and
- Whether the extent of damage is sufficient to compromise the structural integrity of the motor vehicle, or
- Whether evidence of damage, previous damage repair, or heat damage is present in a structural area, or energy management path of the motor vehicle.

Photographs illustrating examples of structural damage and corrosion are shown in **VIRM: Entry certification, Reference material 71**.

Damage/deterioration that must be referred to a repair certifier

Under-body impact damage

A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if it has underbody damage caused by a collision with a substantial object, sufficient to cause the splitting of seam welds, distortion of suspension members or mounting points, or tearing of metal structures.

Denting or distortion

- A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if there is any discernible denting or distortion to the folds or swages in the dog leg, sill panel or structure of the inner/outer sill weld seam, other than minor scraping.
- A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if rocker panels (outer sills) are dented or creased lengthways along the sill and the depth of the crease exceeds 25mm (see Figure 4-1-1).
- A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if rocker panels (outer sills) are vertically dented or creased across the sill regardless of the depth of the crease or dent (see Figure 4-1-1).

Crush zones and kick-up areas

A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if there is distortion of the longitudinal rails affecting the front and rear crush zones and kick-up areas.

Crossmembers

A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if there is denting or distortion of the crossmember as a result of collision with an object.

Cracking

A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if there is cracking in:

- the unibody or chassis
- any crossmembers and subframes
- a load bearing member, or energy management paths in unibody structures
- the body of a vehicle with a body-over-frame chassis in the energy management paths, engine mounts, suspension mounts, body mounts, pillars, or sills.

Repaired damage

A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if signs of fresh repair, rust prevention, acid wash (see **Technical bulletin 9: Acid wash process on used imports**) or under-sealing to any part of the vehicle structure are evident.

Supplementary Restraint System (SRS): Airbags and seatbelt pretensioners

A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if it has a deployed airbag (Note 2) or seatbelt pretensioner, or there is evidence of repairs to or tampering with airbag module covers. (including colour variations in plastic covers to steering wheels, dash panels, interior trim, or non-original stitching to seat mounted airbags). A vehicle must be reported if the SRS warning light stays illuminated when the engine is running.

Water or fire damage

- A vehicle must be repair certified if there is evidence that it has suffered water or fire damage (Note 3) (see **9-1 Water damage** and **9-5 Fire damage**).

Corrosion damage

- **Corrosion damage** (Note 4) is where the metal has been eaten away, which is evident by pitting. The outward signs of such corrosion damage are typically displayed by the swelling of a panel between spot welds, or lifting or bubbling of paint. In extreme cases, the area affected by the corrosion damage will fall out and leave a hole.

  A vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier if there is corrosion damage in:
  - any structural area, as indicated in the shaded areas of Figure 4-1-2
  - sub-frames
  - steering

    - suspension member, including their mounting points.

  A vehicle must be specialist repair certified if there is rust heave.

- **Perforated corrosion** is where the metal is corroded to the extent that it has holes, or holes are exposed when rust scale is removed. If metal is badly pitted causing a loss of metal thickness it must also be treated as perforated corrosion.

If there is perforated corrosion in any area (see Figure 4-1-2), the vehicle must be referred to a specialist repair certifier.

- *Repair* of corrosion on doors, bonnets, hatches and boot lids within a 150mm circle around the outside of hinge or latch components will require specialist repair certification. These ‘no corrosion’ zones are circled in Figure 4-1-3.
- *Replacement* of these parts will not require specialist repair certification, provided the inspector is satisfied that safety systems are not affected (eg side intrusion beams, burst proof locks, frontal impact systems).

The following RepairCert NZ technical documents must be referred to by the specialist repair certifier for the assessment of corrosion:

- **Technical Bulletin # 01-2025 (Corrosion: Evaluation Process)**
- **Technical Bulletin # 02-2025 (Corrosion: Surface Preparation)**
- **Technical Bulletin # 03-2025 (Corrosion: Surface Treatment)**
- **Technical Bulletin # 04-2025 (Corrosion: Surface Coating).**

Permitted cosmetic damage/deterioration

Cosmetic damage to the motor vehicle’s outer body panels is permitted, providing it does not affect the structural integrity of chassis, the energy management paths, or any of the bonded or welded seams and joints used in the manufacturing process.

Cosmetic parts on a unibody chassis are generally bolt on items such as the bonnet, front guards, boot-lid, and in most cases the doors.

Photographs illustrating examples of cosmetic damage are shown in **VIRM: Entry certification, Reference material 72**.

Inspection

A list of specific types of damage follows. It explains the extent to which damage is allowed before a vehicle must be reported.

Underbody impact damage

A vehicle doesn't require specialist repair certification if it has minor underbody impact damage caused by ‘grounding’ the vehicle or where some scraping of the sill seams or floor pan stiffening members has occurred.

Denting or distortion

A vehicle does not require specialist repair certification if rocker panels (outer sills) are dented or creased lengthways along the sill to a depth of less than 25mm.

Cross-members

A vehicle does not require specialist repair certification if it has minor jacking damage to a cross-member, provided there is no indication of loss of steering or suspension alignment.

Repaired damage

A vehicle with repaired damage does not require reporting if repairs are only to correct cosmetic damage to the outer body panels, provided the vehicle inspector is able to discern the extent of the damage and confirm that none of the vehicle manufacturer's seams or joints have been disturbed during the repair.

Vehicles flagged for damage at the border

When a Border Inspection Organisation identifies damage on a vehicle during the border check, the vehicle will be flagged as damaged on LANDATA. If the vehicle inspector determines that the damage does not exceed the threshold for requiring repair certification, an application must be made to remove the damage flag. See **Technical bulletin 6: LT307 Declaring that a vehicle doesn't require repair certification**.

The vehicle inspector must complete the *Request to remove border damage flag* form and give it to the inspecting organisation supervisor authorised to remove damage flags. Before removing the flag, the inspecting organisation must check BIS photos for correlation with repair forms (LT307/LT308).

Request to remove border damage flag forms

Repair certification and damage flags

A vehicle may have a damage flag removed if it has been repaired in accordance with the requirements of **Technical bulletin 5** the **VIRM: Light vehicle repair certification** and it has been requested by a repair certifier, as mentioned in the LT308.

Note 1

Specialist repair certifier in this case means a light vehicle repair certifier or heavy vehicle specialist certifier as applicable to the vehicle class.

Note 2

Unless there is evidence that the airbag has been deployed, it is not expected that the vehicle go to a specialist repair certifier if it has a sports steering wheel fitted with no airbag at entry and is failed and requested that the OE steering wheel be reinstated.

If the airbag has not been deployed it is only expected that the original steering wheel be reinstated and an SRS declaration issued in line with **Technical bulletin 3**.

Note 3

For the purposes of the threshold for requiring repair certification, evidence of water damage may be physical evidence, or it may be that the vehicle has been written-off for insurance purposes as a result of water damage.

Note 4

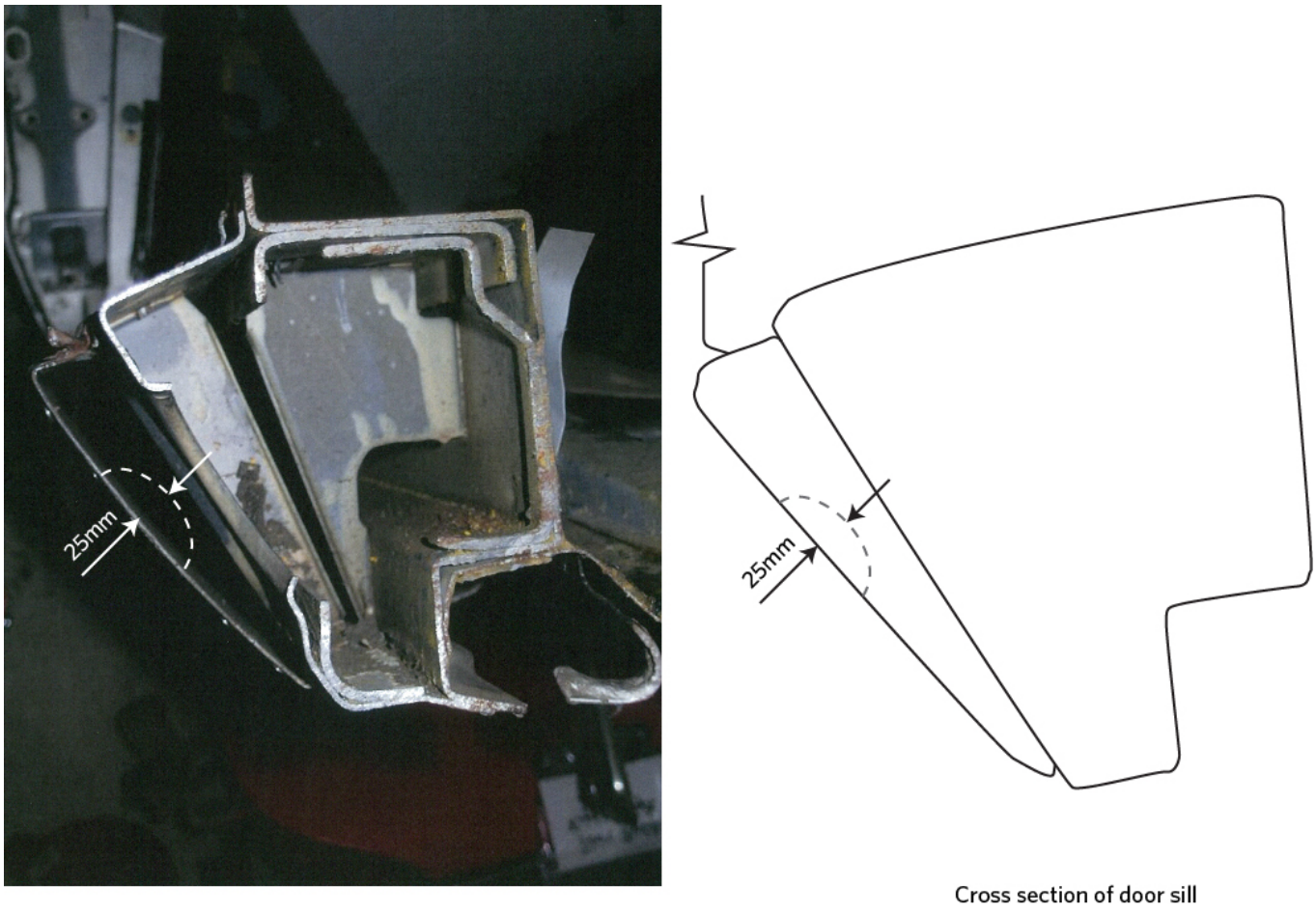
Corrosion damage includes any signs of ‘rust bleed’.

Rust bleed is a rust coloured stain or mark that appears around an area of corrosion that may not be visible. Rust bleed is most commonly found where panels join or overlap when corrosion has started between the two surfaces and moisture has caused a rust stain or mark to run onto the external surface.

Note 5

If there is proof from the insurance company that the vehicle was written off for reasons other than body or structural damage, no referral to a repair certifier is required unless the structural condition of the vehicle exceeds the threshold for requiring repair certification.

Figure 4-1-1. Outer sills cross section and rocker panels



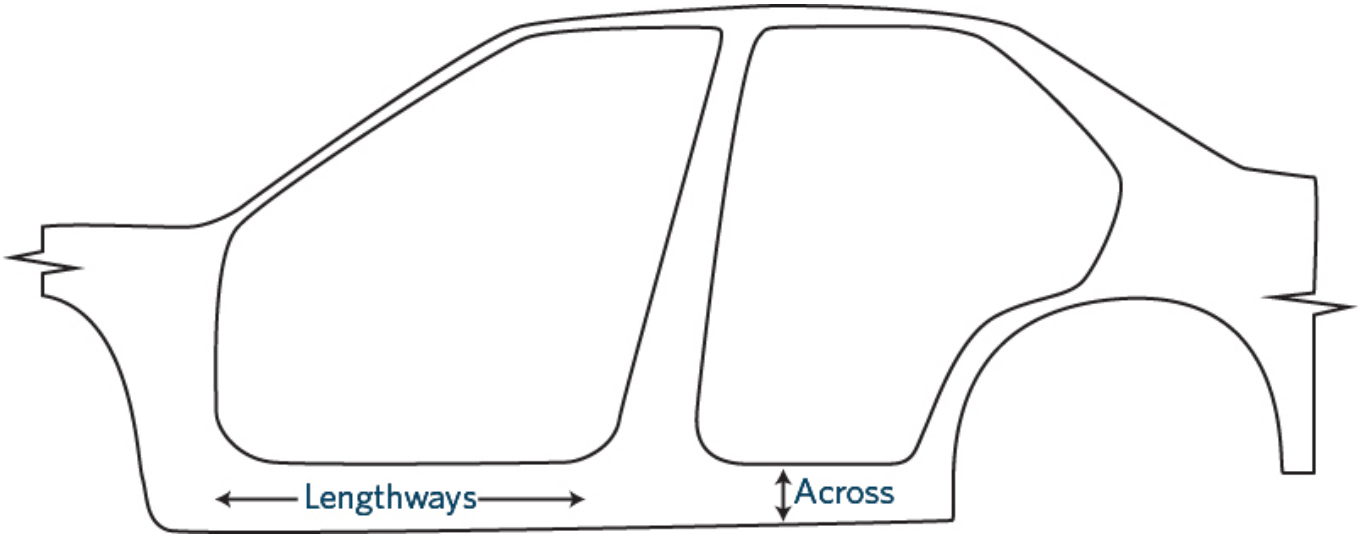


Figure 4-1-2. Structural corrosion damage limits

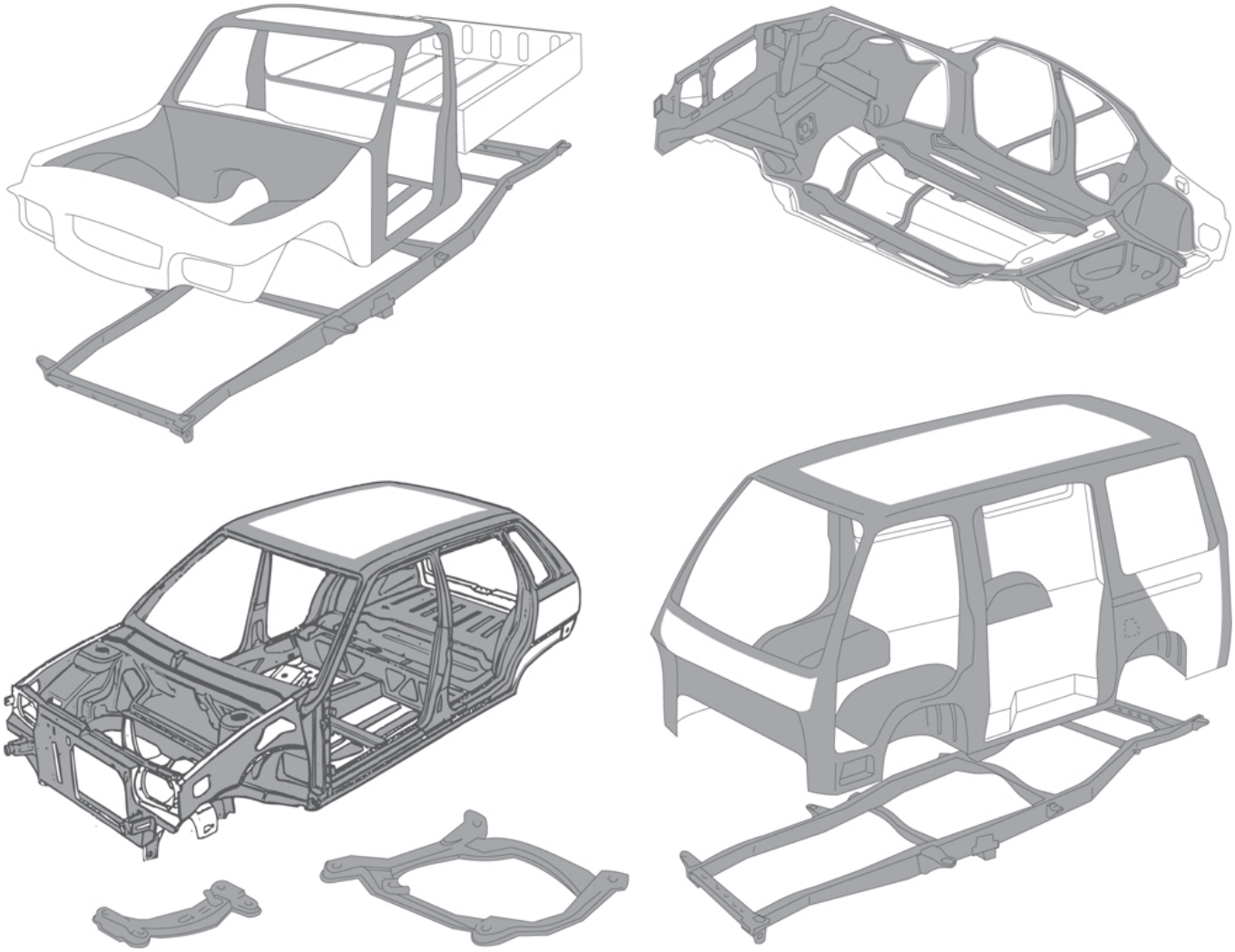


Figure 4-1-4. Rust heave limits

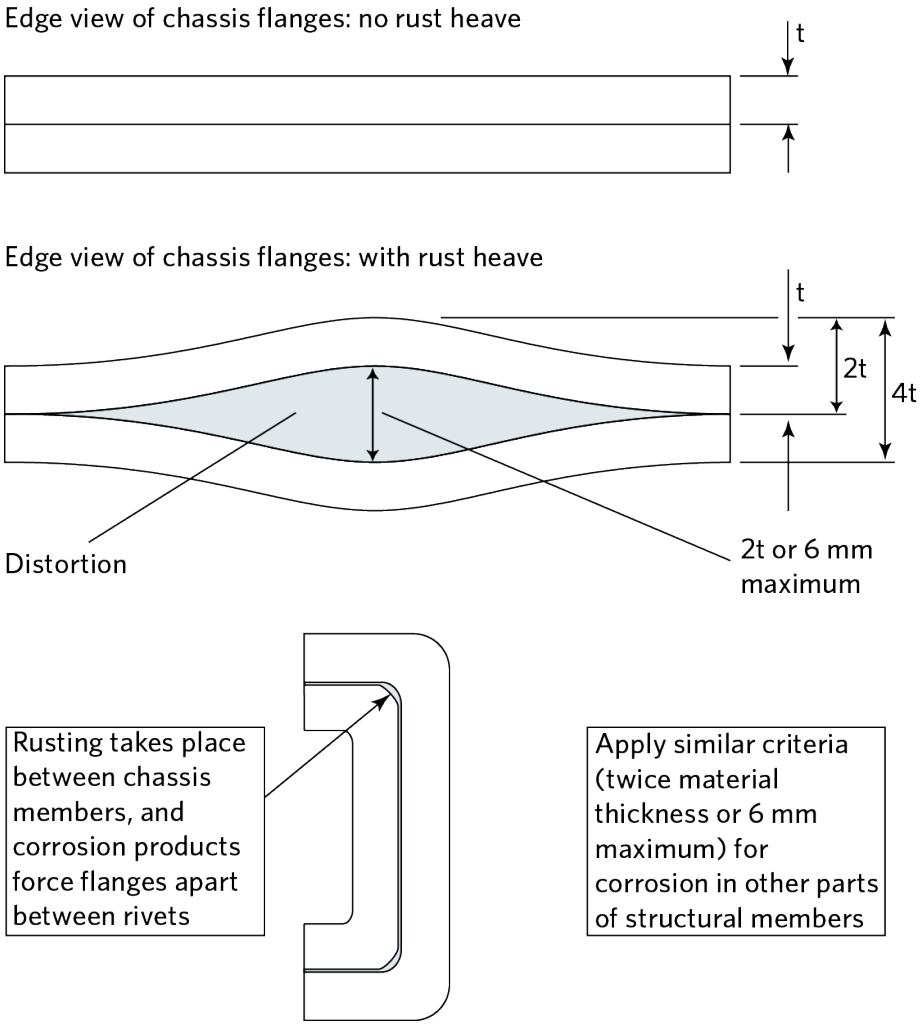
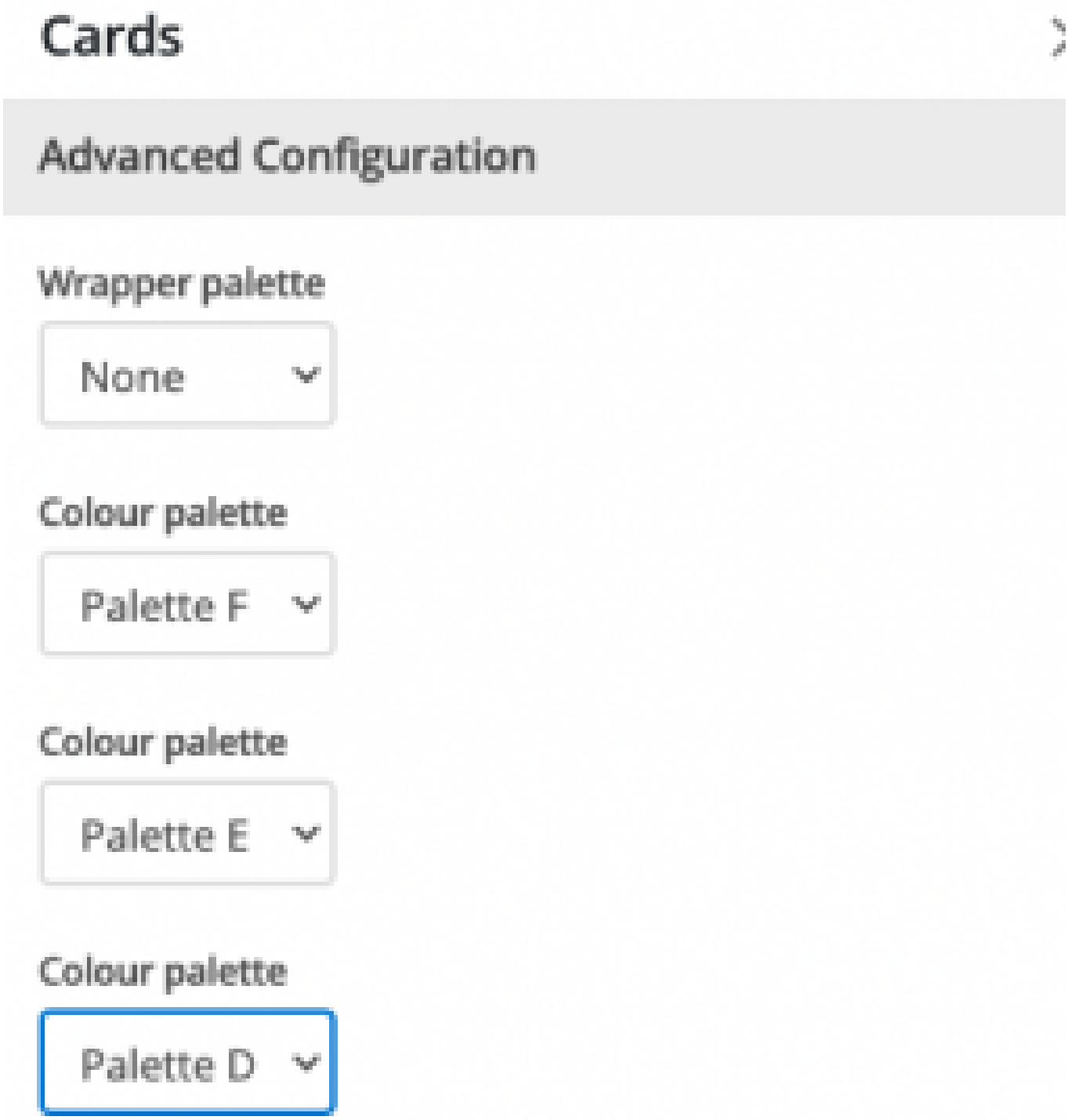


Figure 4-1-3. Hinge and latch anchorage corrosion damage limits



Page amended **30 July 2025** (see **amendment details**)