

Operation of Oversize/Overweight Vehicles on Pennsylvania Roads: A Farmer's Guide



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This brochure describes the size and weight limitations for motor vehicles and implements of husbandry operated on Pennsylvania roads, as well as the agricultural exceptions to those limitations. This brochure also explains the process for applying for a permit to operate vehicles or implements of husbandry that do not fall within those limitations or exceptions. Citations of particular statutes (i.e., 75 Pa.C.S.A.) or regulations (i.e., 67 Pa. Code) are included for you or your attorney's reference.

Definitions (67 Pa. Code § 179.1).

Implement of husbandry: A vehicle designed or adapted and determined by PennDOT to be used exclusively for agricultural operations and only incidentally operated or moved upon the highway.

Oversize: The length, width, or height of a vehicle or combination, including its load(s), excluding mirrors or sunshades, which exceeds the applicable maximum length, width, or height prescribed by law.

Overweight: The gross weight of a vehicle or combination, including its load(s), which exceeds the applicable maximum gross weights prescribed by law.

Urbanized area: A location designated by PennDOT in which travel by permitted vehicles is restricted.

What are the size limitations for farm vehicles and equipment?

Pennsylvania law limits the size of vehicles that can be operated on the highway. In addition to these limits, vehicles are subject to limits that apply to particular roads and bridges.

A. Width

Generally, no vehicle that exceeds eight (8) feet in width may be driven on a highway. However, there are certain exceptions for some farm vehicles and equipment.

1. Any implement of husbandry or vehicle loaded with vegetable produce or forage crops may be up to eleven (11) feet in width as long as it is driven, hauled, or towed between sunrise and sunset on highways other than freeways.

2. An implement of husbandry or vehicle used exclusively for highly perishable crops for processing may be up to 14 feet, six (6) inches, if the vehicle is operated on highways other than freeways between May 20 and October 15 of the same year. Such a vehicle must have two rotating yellow beacons and its four-way flashers operating.

3. Any implement of husbandry that is not wider than 14 feet, six (6) inches in width may be driven, hauled or towed on roads other than limited access freeways between:

(i) parts of one farm owned or operated by the owner of the implement of husbandry.

(ii) farms owned or operated by the owner of the implement of husbandry located not more than 50 miles apart.

(iii) farms, or a farm and a place of business of a mechanic or dealer in implements of husbandry.

These implements may only be operated between sunrise and sunset.

(75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4921).

B. Height

No vehicle may exceed 13 feet, six (6) inches in height. There are no exceptions for farm vehicles or implements of husbandry. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4922).



C. Length

No individual vehicle may exceed 40 feet. For a combination consisting of a tractor and one or two trailers, the length of a single trailer may not exceed 53 feet, provided the distance between the kingpin of the trailer and the centerline of the rear axle or rear axle group does not exceed 41 feet. The length of each double trailer shall not exceed 28½ feet. There are no exceptions for farm vehicles. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4923).

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D. Projecting loads

No load may project more than three (3) feet beyond the front of the carrying vehicle nor more than six (6) feet beyond the rear of the carrying vehicle. If the load extends more than four (4) feet beyond the rear of the vehicle, a red flag at least 12 square inches or, if at night, a red light is required to be attached to the projecting load. The length of a projecting load is also limited by the length requirements relating to entire vehicles as stated above.

Vehicles specifically designed and used to transport live trees for transplanting are exempt from the length restriction, but not from the red flag/red light requirement.

(75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4924).

E. Weight

Except as discussed below, every truck shall have its own registered gross weight based on:

- (i) the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) assigned by the manufacturer (specified on the federal weight certification label);
- (ii) an equivalent weight rating determined by PennDOT based on axle and wheel strength, horsepower, braking power and other factors affecting the ability of the vehicle to handle heavier loads.

No truck shall be operated with a gross weight in excess of its registered weight. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4942).

For a truck-trailer combination, in order to pull a trailer having a registered gross weight over 10,000 pounds at full loading capacity, the pulling truck must be registered at a weight equal to the weight of the combination of the truck and trailer at full trailer load capacity.

The owner of a trailer with a GVWR over 10,000 pounds has the option to reduce the registered gross weight of the trailer to 10,000 pounds without the obligation to increase the registered gross weight of the pulling truck; however, the actual weight of the trailer may not exceed the registered gross weight of the trailer. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4942).

Trucks whose GVWRs fall within the weight ranges of Classes 1 through 4 may be registered at the highest gross or combination weight assigned for the Class in which the truck falls. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1916(b)). Therefore, a truck:

- (i) with a GVWR of 5,000 pounds or less (Class 1) can be registered at 5,000 pounds.
- (ii) with a GVWR of 5,001-7,000 lbs. (Class 2) can be registered at 7,000 pounds.
- (iii) with a GVWR of 7,001-9,000 pounds (Class 3) can be registered at 9,000 pounds.

(iv) with a GVWR of 9,001-11,000 pounds (Class 4) can be registered at 11,000 pounds.

WARNING: The operation of a truck loaded beyond the manufacturer's GVWR may create unsafe conditions and also void the manufacturer's warranty if damage should result from such overloading. Check with your dealer or factory representative. You should also consult your insurer concerning your insurance coverage.

The gross weight maximum of any individual vehicle, including farm vehicles, is 73,280 pounds. The gross weight maximum of any combination is 80,000 pounds. These limits are subject to the registered gross weight of the vehicle, requirements regarding axle weight, and requirements regarding wheel load. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4941).

What if I want to drive a vehicle or haul a load that is larger than those size limitations?

A vehicle can be operated outside of these weight and size limitations as long as a permit for the activity has been granted by PennDOT. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4961, 67 Pa. Code § 179.3).



How do I apply for a permit?

A. Registration

A person wishing to operate an oversize or overweight vehicle on Pennsylvania highways may wish to register with PennDOT. Registration is not mandatory in order to receive a permit, but registration enables the person to apply for a permit by fax or another wire method and pay by a non-certified check, including a company check, or money order. Without registration, the application must be made in person or by mail, accompanied by a certified non-company check or money order.

In order to register, the person must file a registration agreement (Form M-936RA) and a surety bond (Form M-936B) in the amount of at least \$2,000 with PennDOT.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.4).

B. Application

An application for a permit (Form M-936A) must be made to either the district office or county office that has jurisdiction over the point of origin or the point of destination of the trip for which a permit is requested.

Registered persons may apply to the district office in person, by mail, or by fax. The application must be accompanied by a check or money order. If the application is submitted via fax, payment must be made within three (3) working days after the permittee receives the permit.

Non-registered persons may only apply to the district office in person or by mail. A certified check or money order must accompany the application. Non-registered persons may not pay through the use of a company check.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.8).

Applications may be made to the county office in person only.

The fees for oversize vehicle or hauling permits are as follows:

If the vehicle and/or load is 14 feet in width or less, the fee is \$25. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1942(a)(1)).

If the vehicle and/or load is greater than 14 feet in width, the fee is \$50. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1942(a)(2)).

The fee for an overweight vehicle or hauling permit is three (3) cents for every ton-mile by which the gross weight of the vehicle exceeds the registered gross weight. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1942(a)(3)).

If a vehicle and/or load is both oversize and overweight, the applicant must pay both the applicable oversize and the applicable overweight fees. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1942(b)).

C. Indemnification and insurance

In addition to the above application requirements, permittees and their contractors (including pilot car owners) must add the Commonwealth as an additional insured to their insurance policies, in order to indemnify the Commonwealth for any damage or injury to third persons caused by the permitted activity and for which the Commonwealth must pay. Furthermore, the permittee must carry insurance to guarantee coverage for damage and injury to third persons caused by the permitted activity and for which the permittee must pay. In both cases the level of coverage must be at least \$250,000 per person and at least \$1 million per occurrence.

PennDOT may also require the permittee to enter into an agreement or provide security to provide for the restoration of roads and bridges damaged by the permitted action.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.7).

What should I do with the permit once I receive it?

The driver of the permitted vehicle must carry the permit and related documents in the vehicle and must make these documents available to police officers and PennDOT representatives on request.

The permit may not be assigned or transferred to another person.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.10(1)).

Do I need anything besides a permit?

A. Pilot cars

In certain situations, permittees must provide a car or cars to accompany the permitted vehicle during the trip. These cars are known as "pilot cars." Pilot cars must be provided as follows:

1. If the length of the permitted vehicle is greater than 90 feet or the load extends more than 15 feet beyond the rear of the vehicle, a pilot car must follow the permitted vehicle.

2. If the width of the permitted vehicle is greater than 13 feet and there are at least two lanes for traffic moving in the same direction as the permitted vehicle, a pilot car must follow the permitted vehicle. If there is only one lane for traffic moving in the same direction as the permitted vehicle, the pilot car must precede the permitted vehicle.

3. If the height of the permitted vehicle exceeds 14 feet, six (6) inches, the pilot car must precede the permitted vehicle by 1,000 - 3,000 feet.

4. If the permit requires the permitted vehicle to travel over bridges at reduced speeds, a pilot car must follow the permitted vehicle while it is traveling at the reduced speed.

5. If the permit requires the permitted vehicle to either be the only vehicle on a bridge span or to occupy more than one lane while crossing a two-way bridge, one pilot car must precede the permitted vehicle and one pilot car must follow. If the bridge is a one-way bridge, only one pilot car is needed, and it must follow the permitted vehicle.

6. If the permitted vehicle is traveling in an urbanized area during darkness, one pilot car must precede and one pilot car must follow the permitted vehicle.

7. If the permitted vehicle is traveling on a limited access highway and cannot maintain a speed of 40 mph, a pilot car must follow the permitted vehicle. If the limited access highway is within an urbanized area, the permitted vehicle may only travel on that highway between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.10(13)).

B. Signs

Permitted oversize vehicles must display on both the front and rear of the vehicle a seven (7) feet x 18 inches yellow sign bearing the words "OVERSIZE LOAD" in black letters ten (10) inches high with a two 2 inch stroke.

Pilot cars must display on both the front and rear of the car a five (5) feet x one (1) foot yellow sign bearing

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the words "OVERSIZE LOAD" in black letters at least eight (8) inches high.

When a vehicle is no longer oversize, all "OVERSIZE LOAD" signs must be removed or covered.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.10(15)).

C. Flags

Points of excessive length or width must each be marked with a clean, plain, red or fluorescent orange warning flag, at least 18 inches square.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.16)).

D. Inspection reports

Where the permitted vehicle is a truck or truck tractor, the driver vehicle inspection report (as required by federal motor carrier safety regulations) from the previous trip must be carried with the permit.

Where the permitted vehicle is an implement of husbandry, trailer, semi-trailer, or dolly, a safety certification must be carried with the permit. This certification must show that the lights, brakes, tires, steering system, and coupling devices were checked within the seven (7) days prior to the trip and are in safe condition.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.10(17)).



E. Contact between vehicles

Pilot cars must maintain visual and two-way radio contact with the permitted vehicle during movement.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.10(13)(ii)(A)).

F. Lighting systems

If a permitted vehicle requires a pilot car, the permitted vehicle must travel with its headlights and tail-lights on. (67 Pa. Code § 179.10(13)(ii)(B)).

Pilot cars must have one or two flashing or revolving amber lights operating during movement. (67 Pa. Code § 179.10(13)(ii)(C)).

If any required lights are obstructed due to the vehicle's load, equivalent lighting must be displayed at the rear of the load. (67 Pa. Code § 179.10(14)).

For how long is a permit valid?

Generally, a permit is valid only for a single trip between the two points designated on the permit. The permit expires after five (5) weekdays have passed. (67 Pa. Code § 179.10(9)). However, there are some special agricultural permits that last for an extended length of time. See the next section for descriptions.

Are there special permits for agricultural vehicles?

Yes. There are three types of permits specifically authorized for agricultural vehicles.

A. Seasonal permits for implements of husbandry

A permit is available for implements of husbandry up to ten (10) feet in width that will allow them to be operated on limited access highways from sunrise to sunset. While on the limited access highway the vehicle must maintain a speed of at least 40 mph. This permit is valid for 90 days.

A permit is also available for implements of husbandry wider than 14 feet, six (6) inches and up to 16 feet in width that will allow them to be operated on highways other than limited access highways, from sunrise to sunset. This permit is also valid for 90 days.

(67 Pa. Code § 179.15a).

The fee for either of these seasonal permits is \$25. (67 Pa. Code § 179.9(e)(5)).

B. Annual permit for movement of domestic animal feed

A permit, valid for one year, is available for overweight vehicles hauling domestic animal feed in bulk.

The maximum gross weight allowed under this permit is 95,000 lbs. and the maximum weight on any nonsteering axle is 21,000 lbs. Also, this permit does not allow movement on interstate highways. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4976). The fee for this permit is \$400. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1943(g)).

C. Annual permit for movement of live domestic animals

A permit, valid for one year, is available for overweight vehicles hauling live domestic animals. The maximum gross weight allowed under this permit is 95,000 lbs. and the maximum weight on any nonsteering axle is 21,000 lbs. Also, this permit does not allow movement on interstate highways. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 4976.1)). The fee for this permit is \$800. (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 1943(i)).



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