Operation of PA Farm Trucks – Commonly Asked Questions

1. Do I need to get a registration for my trucks if they are only going to be used around the farm?

   Depending on how you plan to use your trucks, the PA Vehicle Code provides you and other farmers with several alternative options to regular truck registration at significantly lower fees. One of these options is the “farm vehicle exemption” for trucks that are only used in areas near the farm. A certificate of exemption must be obtained from PennDOT every two years for each exempt truck. Fees for obtaining a biennial certificate of exemption are identified below.

   There are three main types of exemptions available to farm trucks. One type is available for trucks and truck tractors whose actual weight and weight rating are 17,000 pounds and less (when operated alone or towing another vehicle), and two types are available for trucks and truck tractors whose actual weight or weight rating are greater than 17,000 pounds (when operated alone or towing another vehicle). Restrictions in distance from the farm and use of the vehicle apply to each type of exemption.

   - **The Type A exemption** is available for trucks and truck tractors 17,000 pounds or less. The fee for obtaining this exemption is $24 every two years. Vehicles operating under this exemption may only be operated on roads from sunrise to sunset. They are also limited in area and use to 1) roads that are part of your farm; 2) roads between farms you own or operate not more than 25 miles apart; 3) roads between any of your owned or operated farms and a place of business located within 25 miles of that farm for the purpose of buying or selling agricultural commodities or supplies; or 4) roads between any of your owned or operated farms and a place of business located within 50 miles for the purpose of repairing or servicing the farm vehicle.

   - **The Type C exemption** is available for trucks and truck tractors greater than 17,000 pounds. The fee for obtaining this exemption is $100 every two years. Vehicles operating under this exemption must be annually inspected and display a valid inspection sticker. If properly inspected, they may be operated during both daytime and nighttime hours. They are subject to the same limitations in area in use as are described above for vehicles operating under the Type A exemption.

   - **The Type B exemption** is available for trucks and truck tractors greater than 17,000 pounds. The fee for obtaining this exemption is $50 every two years. These vehicles are not required to be periodically inspected, but are more limited in time and area they may be operated than vehicles operating under the Type C exemption. They may only be operated on roads between sunrise and sunset. And they are also limited in area and use to 1) roads that are part of your farm; 2) roads between farms you own or operate not more than 10 miles apart; 3) roads between any of your owned or operated farms and a place of business located within 10 miles of that farm for the purpose of buying or selling agricultural commodities or supplies; or 4) roads between any of your owned or operated farms and a place of business within 25 miles for the purpose of repairing or servicing the farm vehicle.

   The Vehicle Code requires each truck and truck tractor operated under farm vehicle exemption to have liability insurance coverage that at least meets minimum level of coverage required generally for vehicles under the Code. However, farmers may meet this requirement through coverage of these vehicles under the farm’s general liability policy.

2. What can I do if I need to operate my truck beyond the distance allowances for the farm exemption?

   If you need to use your truck or truck tractor beyond the distance limitations imposed for vehicles operating under a biennial certificate of exemption, you will need to obtain an annual registration from PennDOT. The Vehicle Code allows farmers to obtain a special farm vehicle registration plate at a lower annual fee than commercial vehicles. ($76.50 for weight classes 1 through 4, and one-third the commercial truck fee for all other weight classes).
A farm registered vehicle, is limited in the manner in which the vehicle may be used. It may be only operated 1) on roads that are part of the farm; 2) on roads between farms that you own or operate; 3) on roads between any of your owned and operated farms and a place of business for the purpose of buying or selling agricultural supplies or commodities or for repairing or servicing the vehicle; 4) if sold at auction, roads used in the course of delivering of your agricultural commodities from an auction site to the purchaser’s place of business (the same vehicle that transported the commodities to the auction site must be used); and 5) roads to facilitate use of the vehicle in a driver’s license examination.

Note that there are no distance limitations for registered farm vehicles. The driver of the vehicle, however, may need to comply with driver requirements imposed under federal and state regulations. See the answers to questions 3 and 6 below.

3. Do I need a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) to drive my farm registered or exempt truck?

You do not need a CDL to operate any vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (or, if towing another vehicle a gross combination weight rating) of 26,000 pounds or less. For trucks and truck tractors with a farm vehicle registration or exemption that have a gross weight rating (or gross combination weight rating) over 26,000 pounds, the Vehicle Code does not require a CDL if the driver has a Class C license, the vehicle is being operated in accordance with the farm vehicle’s restrictions in use; and the vehicle is being operated within a 150-mile radius of the farm. If that same truck or truck tractor is operated beyond that 150-mile radius, the driver will need to have a CDL.

4. How can I obtain a farm vehicle registration or farm vehicle exemption for my truck?

To obtain a farm vehicle registration or farm vehicle biennial certificate of exemption for your truck or truck tractor, you will need to complete and submit a MV-77 application form to PennDOT, along with the appropriate fee for the registration or exemption you are seeking. The MV-77 application form is available online at: http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/pdotforms/mv_forms/mv-77.pdf. You will also need to submit copies of certain tax documents to demonstrate you are engaged in farming as a business. The instructions area of the MV-77 application form provides information on those documents needed to be submitted with the application.

5. Do I need a title for my farm registered or farm exempt truck?

Yes, all trucks and truck tractors – including farm vehicles – must have a certificate of title under Pennsylvania law.

6. Are drivers of farm-registered or farm-exempt trucks exempt from requirements that commercial truck drivers must comply with (like medical cards and driver logs)?

The simple answer is that drivers of farm trucks are not totally exempted from commercial truck driver standards and requirements. And recent changes to Pennsylvania's regulations for operating "commercial" trucks now make the federal commercial trucking regulations apply to locally operated trucks and drivers.

Pennsylvania’s recent enactment of Act 81 limited the type of “nonhazardous” farm truck whose drivers are subject to burdensome federal driver requirements to trucks operated intrastate whose weight and weight rating are at or below 26,000 pounds. For farm trucks greater than 26,000 pounds, farm trucks greater than 10,000 pounds operated outside PA, and farm trucks transporting hazardous materials in amounts that require the vehicle to display of hazardous material placards, the driver and farmer using the driver will need to be concerned with the federal driver requirements - minimum age, medical certification, written driver's hour logs, and daily driver vehicle inspections and written reports of vehicle defects and repairs.

The requirements that do or do not apply to the driver can vary from trip to trip. A fuller explanation of the requirements and special provisions is available on PFB’s website, at http://www.pfb.com/news/ag-issues/vehicle-regs-update-dec-2010.pdf.
7. Do I need a U.S. DOT number for my farm truck?

For intrastate operation (trips made exclusively within Pennsylvania), farm trucks should not be required to have or display a USDOT number, unless the truck is transporting hazardous materials in amounts that require the truck to display hazardous materials placards. An administrative order issued December 2010 by PennDOT Secretary Allen Biehler has waived requirements for “nonhazardous” intrastate farm trucks to have or display USDOT numbers.

However, if you use your farm-registered truck outside of Pennsylvania and the actual weight or weight rating of your truck (or if towing another vehicle the actual weight or weight rating of the combination) is greater than 10,000 pounds, you will be required to display on the vehicle the name of the business, the place where the business is located, and the USDOT number that has been assigned to the business (Fed Regs § 390.21). There are no exceptions provided to farms or other business. A business will not be able to comply with this requirement unless it has acquired a USDOT number.