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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- SIZE, WEIGHT, AND LOAD LIMITS

Introduced By: Representative Megan L. Cotter

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Corporations

(Dept. of Transportation)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 31-25-2, 31-25-5, 31-25-13, 31-25-14, 31-25-16 and 31-25-21 of
2 the General Laws in Chapter 31-25 entitled "Size, Weight, and Load Limits" are hereby amended
3 to read as follows:

4 **31-25-2. Vehicles exempt from limitations.**

5 (a) The provisions of this chapter governing size, weight, and load shall not apply to:

6 (1) Road machinery when actively participating in work in an active work zone or crossing
7 a highway within a work zone. This does not include travelling down a highway under their own
8 power;

9 (2) Farm vehicles, ~~including~~ and farm ~~tractors, temporarily moved~~ machinery, incidentally,
10 operated upon a highway as defined in § 31-3-2(3), are exempt from § 31-25-3 maximum width, §
11 31-25-5 maximum length of single vehicle and load, and § 31-25-7 front and rear extensions of
12 load up to fifteen feet (15'). Farm machinery and farm vehicles hauling non-divisible farm
13 machinery, incidentally operated upon a highway as defined in § 31-3-2(3), are exempt from § 31-
14 25-13 axle load limit and § 31-25-14 maximum weight and tandem axles;

15 (3) Any vehicle hauling fodder or forage for farming purposes shall be exempt from the
16 provisions of § 31-25-10(a) relating to covering loads only;

17 ~~(3)(4)~~ (4) Any vehicle owned and operated by the Rhode Island public transit authority that is
18 designed for carrying passengers ~~and is comprised of two (2) sections permanently joined by a~~
19 ~~hinge mechanism or an articulated joint that allows vertical and horizontal movement and a passage~~

~~for riders moving from one section to the other~~ is exempt from the following sections: § 31-25-5 maximum length of single vehicle and load, § 31-25-13 axle load limit, and § 31-25-14 maximum weight and tandem axles while travelling on designated Rhode Island public transit authority routes. The department of transportation will review as needed the vehicles that are exempt and the routes they travel to ensure safe travel;

~~(4)~~(5) A vehicle operated under the terms of a ~~special~~ permit issued as provided in this chapter;

~~(5)~~(6) Covered heavy-duty tow and recovery vehicles as defined in § 31-1-4(a);

~~(6)~~(7) Emergency vehicles with a weight limit of up to a maximum gross vehicle weight of eighty-six thousand pounds (86,000 lbs.) or less than twenty-four thousand pounds (24,000 lbs.) on a single steering axle; thirty-three thousand five hundred pounds (33,500 lbs.) on a single-drive axle; sixty-two thousand pounds (62,000 lbs.) on a tandem axle; or fifty-two thousand pounds (52,000 lbs.) on a tandem rear drive steer axle; or

~~(7)~~(8) Natural gas vehicles up to a maximum gross vehicle weight of eighty-two thousand pounds (82,000 lbs.) by an amount that is equal to the difference between the weight of the vehicle attributable to the natural gas tank and fueling system carried by that vehicle; and the weight of a comparable diesel tank and fueling system.

(b) The provisions of this chapter governing size, weight, and load shall not apply to fire apparatus acquired by a city or town within this state prior to July 1, 1999.

(c) Nothing in this section shall permit these vehicles to travel over any structure, highway, or portion of highway that is weight restricted for the vehicle load.

31-25-5. Maximum length of single vehicle and load.

(a) No vehicle, including any load on it, except Rhode Island public transit authority articulated buses, shall exceed a length of ~~forty feet (40')~~ forty-five feet (45') extreme overall dimension inclusive of front and rear bumpers, ~~or in the case of a motor bus, motorized camper or camping recreational vehicle forty-five feet (45').~~

(b) Any carrier or persons operating a vehicle that exceeds the maximum length, as permitted or as defined in this section, shall be fined two hundred dollars (\$200) per foot over length or portion of it.

31-25-13. Axle load limit.

(a) The gross weight imposed on the highway by the wheels of any one axle of a vehicle shall not exceed twenty-two thousand four hundred pounds (22,400 lbs.) or the gross axle weight rating of the axle as set by the manufacturer.

(b) For the purposes of this chapter, “axle load” is defined as the total load transmitted to

the road by all wheels whose centers are included between two (2) parallel transverse vertical planes forty inches (40") apart, extending across the full width of the vehicle.

(c) Violations of this section are subject to fines enumerated in § 31-25-14.

31-25-14. Maximum weight and tandem axles.

(a) It shall be unlawful to transport or operate over or upon any public highway in this state any vehicle equipped with tandem axles, should the gross weight of the axles exceed thirty-six thousand pounds (36,000 lbs.) if the axle spacing does not exceed eight feet (8').

(b) With respect to all public highways, the overall gross weight on a group of two (2) or more consecutive axles of a vehicle or combination of vehicles, shall be determined by the following bridge gross weight formula:

$$W = 500 [(LN / (N-1)) + 12N + 36]$$

where W = the overall gross weight on any group of two or more consecutive axles to the nearest five hundred pounds (500 lbs.); L = the distance in feet between the extremes of any group of two (2) or more consecutive axles; and N = the number of axles in the group under consideration. This overall gross weight of any vehicle or combination of vehicles may not exceed eighty thousand pounds (80,000 lbs.) except as specified in §§ 31-25-1, 31-25-2, and 31-25-21.

(c) In any calculation using the formula in subsection (b) of this section in which the tandem axle limit is less than thirty-six thousand pounds (36,000 lbs.), thirty-six thousand pounds (36,000 lbs.) shall be considered the legal limit. Single axle limits shall be as defined in § 31-25-13. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to abrogate any of the "grandfather rights" in existence as of April 1, 1989.

(d) Vehicles equipped with lift axles must have lift axles down whenever they are carrying a load. Any carrier or persons violating this section shall be fined one hundred dollars (\$100).

~~(d)~~(e) Penalties.

(1) Any carrier or persons operating a vehicle or combination of vehicles that exceeds the weight limits of tandem-axle vehicles, as defined in this section, shall be fined one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125) per one hundred pounds (100 lbs.) overweight or portion of it.

(2) Any carrier or persons operating a vehicle or combination of vehicles that exceeds the single axle weight limits of twenty-two thousand four hundred pounds (22,400 lbs.) ~~single axle limits~~ or the gross axle weight rating as set by the manufacturer as cited in § 31-25-13, shall be fined one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125) per one hundred pounds (100 lbs.) overweight or portion of it.

(3) Any carrier or persons operating a vehicle or combination of vehicles that exceeds the bridge gross weight formula, as defined in this section, are subject to fines enumerated in § 31-25-

1 16(c)(2) through (c)(4).

2 **31-25-16. ~~Authorized weight shown in registration — Exceeding limit.~~ Authorized**
3 **weight -- Exceeding limit.**

4 (a) The administrator of the division of motor vehicles shall insert in the registration card
5 issued for a vehicle the gross weight for which it is registered. If it is a truck tractor to be used for
6 propelling semi-trailers, the administrator shall separately insert the total permissible gross weight
7 of the truck tractor and semi-trailers to be propelled by it. It shall be unlawful for any carrier to
8 operate or permit to be operated any vehicle or combination of vehicles of a gross weight in excess
9 of that registered by the administrator of the division of motor vehicles, permitted by the department
10 of transportation, [manufacture certification of the gross vehicle weight rating and/or gross](#)
11 [combination weight rating, bridge gross weight formula](#) or in excess of the limitations set forth in
12 this chapter.

13 (b) For the purposes of this chapter, “carrier” means and includes any company or person
14 who furthers their commercial or private enterprise by use of the vehicle.

15 (c)(1) Penalties for violations of this section will be calculated on the legal weight in
16 comparison to the actual weight and shall be heard and adjudicated at the traffic tribunal.

17 (2) The overweight penalties for vehicles with ten thousand pounds (10,000 lbs.) gross
18 vehicle weight or less shall be one hundred dollars (\$100) per thousand pounds overweight or
19 portion of it.

20 (3) The overweight penalties for vehicles exceeding ten thousand pounds (10,000 lbs.)
21 gross vehicle weight shall be one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125.00) per five hundred pounds
22 (500 lbs.) overweight or portion of it.

23 (4) The overweight penalty for vehicles being operated in excess of one hundred four
24 thousand, eight hundred pounds (104,800 lbs.) gross vehicle weight shall be one thousand twenty-
25 five dollars (\$1,025) in addition to the penalties enumerated in subsection (c)(3) of this section.

26 (5) The overweight penalty for vehicles being operated in excess of one hundred thirty
27 thousand pounds (130,000 lbs.) gross vehicle weight shall be two thousand five hundred dollars
28 (\$2,500) in addition to the penalties enumerated in subsection (c)(3) of this section.

29 **31-25-21. Power to permit excess size or weight of loads.**

30 (a) The department of transportation, with respect to highways under its jurisdiction, may,
31 in its discretion, upon application in writing and good cause being shown for it, approve the
32 issuance of a special permit in writing authorizing the applicant to operate or move a vehicle, or
33 combination of vehicles, of a size or weight of vehicle or load exceeding eighty thousand pounds
34 (80,000 lbs.) or otherwise not in conformity with the provisions of chapters 1 — 27 of this title

1 upon any highway under the jurisdiction of the party granting the permit and for the maintenance
2 of which the party is responsible. Permits that have been issued for a full year shall not be required
3 to be renewed for the period of time for which payment has been made and the application and
4 other required documentation has been completed and filed. Provided, that neither the department
5 of transportation nor the local authorities may approve the issuance of permits for divisible loads
6 weighing in excess of the limits set by the director of the department of transportation by and
7 through the rules and regulations promulgated by the department of transportation entitled “rules
8 and regulations regarding overweight and oversize vehicle permits”.

9 (1) Provided, however, that for milk products, any vehicle carrying fluid milk products
10 shall be considered a load that cannot be easily dismantled or divided.

11 (b) The director of the department of transportation may enter into agreements with other
12 states, the District of Columbia, and Canadian provinces providing for the reciprocal enforcement
13 of the overweight or over-dimensional vehicle permit laws of those jurisdictions entering into the
14 agreement.

15 (c) **Single trip non-divisible permit fee.** A fee of forty dollars (\$40.00) shall be paid to
16 the department of transportation for the issuance of each non-divisible single trip permit. Upon
17 approval of the application, the department of transportation shall provide the approved permit. The
18 driver must possess the permit and documentation as required by the permit at all times.

19 (d) **Annual blanket permit fee.** An annual fee of four hundred dollars (\$400) paid to the
20 department of transportation shall exempt the payor from the necessity of paying single trip permit
21 fees for non-divisible construction equipment loads, boats, or marine assets of less than one
22 hundred thirty thousand pounds (130,000 lbs.) as found in subsection (c). However, payment of the
23 fee shall not be deemed to authorize noncompliance with the rules and regulations promulgated by
24 the department of transportation entitled “rules and regulations regarding overweight and oversize
25 vehicle permits”.

26 (e) Blanket permits may be issued, as determined by the department of transportation, for
27 intrastate movement of non-divisible construction equipment loads, boats, or marine assets upon
28 payment of the fee set forth in subsection (d). If used in conjunction with an annual divisible load
29 permit, the limits and requirements of the blanket permit shall supersede the requirements of the
30 divisible load permit. The driver must possess both permits and all required documentation. The
31 duration of the blanket permit may not exceed one year. The blanket permit load shall be limited
32 to a minimum overall length of fifty-five feet (55'), a maximum overall length of eighty feet (80'),
33 a maximum width of twelve feet four inches (12' 4"), a maximum gross weight of one hundred
34 thirty thousand pounds (130,000 lbs.), and a maximum axle weight of twenty-five thousand pounds

1 (25,000 lbs.); provided, that the department of transportation, with respect to highways under its
2 jurisdiction, may, in its discretion and upon application and for good cause shown, approve the
3 issuance of a single trip non-divisible permit authorizing the applicant to exceed one hundred thirty
4 thousand pounds (130,000 lbs.) for non-divisible loads. A flashing amber light shall be in operation
5 above the highest point of the vehicle and shall be visible from both the front and rear of the vehicle;
6 and signs and red warning flags shall be affixed to all extremities. All blanket permits issued in
7 accordance with this section shall be effective during daylight and night-time hours for all over-
8 dimensional moves made and travel shall be allowed on state highways. The specifically described
9 vehicle must be certified originally by the manufacturer to possess the braking and carrying
10 capacity for the weight specified on the application.

11 (f) Permission to travel is always subject to weather and road conditions. The following
12 restrictions on travel times shall apply to all vehicles over ~~eight feet six inches (8'6")~~ ten feet (10')
13 wide, over eighty feet (80') long, or over one hundred thirty thousand pounds (130,000 lbs.):

14 (1) **Freeways and arterial roadways.**

15 No travel will be allowed between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. or between 3:00
16 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

17 (2) [Deleted by P.L. 2022, ch. 178, § 1 and P.L. 2022, ch. 179, § 1.]

18 (3) **Holidays.**

19 Memorial Day, Victory Day, Labor Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Columbus
20 Day — No Saturday, Sunday, or Monday day or night travel.

21 Thanksgiving Day — No travel on Wednesday through Sunday of Thanksgiving week in
22 any calendar year.

23 Independence Day, Veterans Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Juneteenth — No day
24 or night travel and no travel the previous night.

25 Easter Sunday. No Saturday night or Sunday travel.

26 (4) Violations of this section are subject to fines enumerated in § 31-25-24.

27 (g) Blanket permits shall not be granted for travel over the following bridges:

28 Blackstone River Viaduct 750 carrying I-295 northbound and southbound over the
29 Blackstone River;

30 ~~Kingston Road Bridge No. 403 carrying I-95 northbound and southbound over Kingston~~
31 ~~Road.~~

32 (h) Travel of blanket permits through zones with reductions in lane width such as
33 construction zones will not be allowed. Prior to travel, blanket permit holders are responsible to
34 verify the location of construction zones and lane width reductions. Locations of lane width

1 reduction zones are available through the state department of transportation’s construction office.

2 (i) Upon approval of the annual blanket permit application, the department of transportation
3 shall provide the approved permit. The driver must possess the permit and documentation as
4 required by the permit at all times.

5 (j) Any carrier or persons found to be operating without a required permit, or in excess of
6 their permit limits, three (3) times within a one-year period shall be revoked of their ability to use
7 and receive permits within the state for up to thirty (30) days. Additional violations shall result in
8 revocation of up to ninety (90) days.

9 (k) Operation of any vehicle in excess of the requirements of any permit shall void that
10 permit and result in the imposition of fines as provided in this chapter.

11 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- SIZE, WEIGHT, AND LOAD LIMITS

- 1 This act would provide a series of updates to size, weight, and load regulations for
2 commercial and specialized vehicles.
3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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