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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES  
GENERALLY

Introduced By: Senators Britto, McKenney, Burke, Urso, and Bissaillon

Date Introduced: March 13, 2026

Referred To: Senate Housing & Municipal Government

(Dept. of Transportation)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 31-23-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-23 entitled "Equipment  
2 and Accessories Generally" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **31-23-1. Driving of unsafe vehicle — Disobedience of requirements — Inspections of**  
4 **motor carriers — Fines.**

5 (a) It is a civil violation for any person to drive or move, or for the owner, employer or  
6 employee to cause or knowingly permit to be driven or moved, on any highway any vehicle or  
7 combination of vehicles which is in such an unsafe condition as to endanger any person, or which  
8 does not contain those parts or is not at all times equipped with lamps and other equipment in proper  
9 condition and adjustment as required in this chapter or chapter 24 of this title, or for any person to  
10 do any act forbidden or fail to perform any act required under these chapters.

11 (b)(1) For the purpose of reducing the number and severity of accidents, all commercial  
12 motor vehicles must meet applicable standards set forth in this chapter and chapter 24 of this title  
13 and in the federal motor carrier safety regulations (FMCSR) contained in 49 CFR Parts 387 and  
14 390-399, and the Hazardous Materials Regulations in 49 CFR Parts 107 (subparts F and G only),  
15 171-173, 177, 178 and 180, as amended except as may be determined by the administrator to be  
16 inapplicable to a state enforcement program, as amended and adopted by the U.S. Department of  
17 Transportation (U.S. DOT), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, as may be amended from  
18 time to time. Part 391.11(b)(1) of FMCSR, 49 CFR 391.11(b)(1) shall not apply to intrastate drivers

1 of commercial motor vehicles except for drivers of school buses and vehicles placarded under 49  
2 CFR Part 172, Subpart F. Rules and Regulations shall be promulgated by the director of the  
3 department of revenue for the administration and enforcement of motor carrier safety. The rules  
4 and regulations shall be promulgated to ensure uniformity in motor carrier safety enforcement  
5 activities and to increase the likelihood that safety defects, driver deficiencies, and unsafe carrier  
6 practices will be detected and corrected.

7 (2) Effective April 1, 2027, every carrier that operates a motor vehicle engaged in intrastate  
8 commerce must be permanently marked with a USDOT number assigned in a manner conforming  
9 to the provisions of 49 CFR 390.21T.

10 (3) For purposes of § 31-23-1(b)(2), the following vehicles which operated solely within  
11 the State of Rhode Island are exempted from the vehicle marking and DOT number requirements:

12 (i) Vehicles owned and operated by the State of Rhode Island or a political subdivision  
13 thereof;

14 (ii) Vehicles carrying "hazardous materials" that are owned and operated by a city, town  
15 or agency of the State of Rhode Island, but this exemption shall not apply to a private contractor  
16 transporting hazardous materials on behalf of a city, town or an agency of the State of Rhode Island;

17 (iii) Transit-type buses operated by cities or towns that are used to transport persons locally  
18 and which are marked with the name of the municipal bus company or its logo;

19 (iv) Buses operated by the Rhode Island public transit authority including the vehicles  
20 operated under the ride program;

21 (v) School buses and school pupil transport vehicles that transport students and or pupils  
22 locally; and

23 (vi) Vehicles of professional driving schools that are used to provide driving skills training  
24 for Class A, B, or C commercial driver licenses.

25 ~~(2)~~(4) Any carrier convicted of violating the rules and regulations established pursuant to  
26 this subsection shall be fined as provided in § 31-41.1-4 for each offense.

27 (c) For the purposes of this section, "carrier" is defined as any company or person who  
28 furthers their commercial or private enterprise by use of a vehicle that has a gross vehicle weight  
29 rating ~~(GVWR) of ten thousand and one (10,001) or more pounds, or that transports hazardous~~  
30 ~~material~~ or gross combination weight rating, or gross vehicle weight or gross combination weight  
31 of ten thousand one pounds (10,001 lbs.) or more, whichever is greater; or is designed or used to  
32 transport more than eight (8) passengers, including the driver, for compensation; or is designed or  
33 used to transport more than fifteen (15) passengers including the driver, and is not used to transport  
34 passengers for compensation; or is used in transporting hazardous material and transported in a

1 [quantity requiring placarding.](#)

2 (d) Authorized examiners, investigators, officers, or regulatory inspectors from the  
3 department of revenue with proper identification issued by the director of the department of  
4 revenue, the state police, and local law enforcement officials with proper identification certifying  
5 they are qualified motor carrier enforcement personnel trained according to subsection (f) of this  
6 section, shall have a right of entry and authority to examine all equipment of motor carriers and  
7 lessors and enter upon and perform inspections of motor carrier vehicles in operation. They shall  
8 have authority to inspect, examine, and copy all accounts, books, records, memoranda,  
9 correspondence and other documents of the motor carriers and or lessors and the documents,  
10 accounts, books, records, correspondence, and memoranda of any person controlling, controlled  
11 by, or under common control of any carrier which relate to the enforcement of this chapter.

12 (e)(1) Authorized examiners, investigators, officers, or regulatory inspectors from the state  
13 police, local law enforcement officials or the department of revenue shall declare “out of service”  
14 any motor vehicle which, by reason of its mechanical condition or loading, is so imminently  
15 hazardous to operate as to be likely to cause an accident or a breakdown. An “out of service vehicle”  
16 sticker shall be used to mark vehicles out of service. The “out of service vehicle” sticker shall be  
17 affixed to the driver’s window on power units placed out of service and, affixed to the left front  
18 corner of trailers or semi-trailers placed out of service.

19 (2) No person shall remove the “out of service vehicle” sticker from any motor vehicle  
20 prior to completion of all repairs required by the “out of service” notice.

21 (3) Any motor vehicle discovered to be in an unsafe condition while being operated on the  
22 highway may be continued in operation only to the nearest place where repairs can be safely  
23 effected.

24 (4) Operation in an unsafe condition will be conducted only if it is less hazardous to the  
25 public than to permit the vehicle to remain on the highway.

26 (5) A motor carrier shall not require or permit a person to operate a motor vehicle declared  
27 out of service until all the repairs required by the out of service notice are satisfactorily completed.

28 (6) Any person convicted of unauthorized removal or causing to be removed an “out of  
29 service vehicle” sticker shall be fined as provided in § 31-41.1-4.

30 (7) Any person convicted of operating or causing to operate an “out of service vehicle” on  
31 a public highway shall be fined as provided in § 31-41.1-4.

32 (f) In order to enforce the provisions of this section, authorized examiners, investigators,  
33 officers, or regulatory inspectors must satisfactorily complete a course of instruction as prescribed  
34 by the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), Federal Motor Carrier Safety

1 Administration in the federal motor carrier safety regulations (FMCSR) safety inspection  
2 procedures, and out of service criteria with at least annual in-service training covering the  
3 prescribed instruction. [Inspector certification and annual in-service trainings are to be managed by](#)  
4 [the Rhode Island state police as the lead Motor Carrier Safety Administration Program agency.](#)

5 (g) Violations of the provisions of this section shall be recorded in the commercial vehicle  
6 inspection report approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), Federal Motor  
7 Carrier Safety Administration in addition to the appropriate Rhode Island state uniform summons.

8 (h) Any fine imposed as a result of a violation of this section shall not be subject to any  
9 additional assessments imposed pursuant to any other laws of the state of Rhode Island.

10 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 -- EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES  
GENERALLY

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- 1           This act would, effective April 1, 2027, require every vehicle that operates in intrastate
- 2 commerce be permanently marked with a USDOT number.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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