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Guidelines

Tow Truck Licensing and Permit Requirements

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Refer to the Main Roads website for current version.

D21#508039
July 2021

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Document Control

Owner	Director Heavy Vehicle Services
Custodian	Manager Heavy Vehicle Road Network Access
Document Number	D21#508039
Issue Date	July 2021
Review Frequency	As Required

Amendments

Revision Number	Revision Date	Description of Key Changes	Section / Page No.

DEFINITIONS

The following are definitions for terms used in these Guidelines. Refer to the definitions in the *Road Traffic (Administration) Act 2008* and the *Road Traffic (Vehicles) Act 2012* and any subsidiary legislation to these Acts for the meanings of any terms not defined in this section. If a definition in the relevant Acts or the subsidiary legislation conflicts with a definition in this section, the definition in this section prevails for the purpose of these Guidelines.

Term	Definition
Class 1 Oversize Period Permit	A 3-year permit that allows a vehicle combination up to 5.5 metres wide, 5.5 metres high and 40 metres long to have an unlimited number of journeys on any road State-wide, except on Freeways, subject to the <i>Class 1 Oversize Period Permit Operating Conditions</i> .
Commissioner of Main Roads	A reference to the Commissioner of Main Roads in these Guidelines is a reference to Main Roads Heavy Vehicle Services who have the delegated authority to act on behalf of the Commissioner.
Flat towed	A method of towing a disabled vehicle where the front wheels of the towed vehicle are only lifted the minimal amount necessary to enable the towed vehicle to be steered without transferring excess mass onto the drive axle group of the towed vehicle.
Heavy Lift Tow Truck	A motor vehicle equipped with a crane used or intended to be used for the lifting, salvaging, carrying or towing of heavy vehicles and includes any motor vehicle to which is attached (temporarily or otherwise) a device or trailer, which is used or intended to be used for the lifting, salvaging and carrying of any heavy vehicle.
HVS	Main Roads Heavy Vehicle Services
Main Roads website	www.mainroads.wa.gov.au
Motor Vehicle	A vehicle propelled by a motor that forms part of the vehicle.
Permit	A permit issued by HVS under the provisions of Part 4 of the Road Traffic (Vehicles) Act 2012.
Single Trip Permit	A single use permit issued to a specific vehicle on a specific route.
Tow Truck	A motor vehicle equipped with a crane used or intended to be used for the lifting, salvaging, carrying or towing of vehicles and includes any motor vehicle to which is attached (temporarily or otherwise) a device or trailer, which is used or intended to be used for the lifting, salvaging and carrying of any motor vehicle.
Trailer	A vehicle without its own motive power that is built to be towed, or is towed, by a motor vehicle, but does not include a motor vehicle that is being towed.
Vehicle	A single motor vehicle or a single trailer, but not a vehicle combination.
Vehicle Combination	More than one vehicle directly or indirectly attached to one another.

1 PURPOSE

These guidelines have been developed to ensure there is a consistent understanding of the requirements associated with tow trucks towing heavy vehicles.

2 LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Tow Trucks

- 2.1.1 A tow truck must be licensed as a tow truck.
- 2.1.2 A person must not use or drive a tow truck, or operate a vehicle as a tow truck, unless the vehicle licence for the tow truck or vehicle allows it to be used as a tow truck.
- 2.1.3 Heavy Lift Tow Trucks must be approved by the Department of Transport (DoT) and must be driven in accordance with any conditions of the vehicle's licence, as imposed by DoT.

2.2 Towed Vehicles

A vehicle licence is not required for a motor vehicle or trailer that is an unlicensed vehicle of any type being towed by a tow truck. A vehicle not licensed as a tow truck is not permitted to tow an unlicensed vehicle of any type.

3 WA HEAVY VEHICLE ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENT

To obtain a permit from HVS, the operator of a tow truck must be accredited under the WA Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme (WAHVAS) for Maintenance Management, Fatigue Management and Dimension and Loading Management.

4 PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

4.1 General Requirements

- 4.1.1 Part 8 of the *Road Traffic (Vehicles) Regulations 2014* prescribes the mass and dimension requirements for vehicles, hereinafter referred to as the statutory mass and dimension limits. Nothing in Part 8 exempts a tow truck from the statutory mass and dimension limits.
- 4.1.2 A tow truck requires a permit if it and/or the vehicle it is towing, exceeds any statutory mass or dimension limit. The main statutory mass and dimension limits are as follows:
 - (a) 2.5 metres in width;
 - (b) 4.3 metres in height;
 - (c) 12.5 metres in length without the towed vehicle connected;
 - (d) 19 metres in length with the towed vehicle connected;
 - (e) 42.5 tonnes gross mass;
 - (f) 6.5 tonnes on the steer axle with tyres less than 375mm wide;
 - (g) 7.0 tonnes on the steer axle with tyres at least 375mm wide;
 - (h) 10 tonnes on a twin steer axle group with non-load sharing suspension;
 - (i) 11 tonnes on a twin steer axle group with load sharing suspension and tyres less than 375mm wide;

- (j) 12 tonnes on a twin steer axle group with load sharing suspension and tyres at least 375mm wide;
- (k) 9 tonnes on a single axle with dual tyres;
- (l) 16.5 tonnes on a tandem axle group with dual tyres;
- (m) 20 tonnes on a tri or quad axle group, with dual tyres.

4.1.3 HVS will only issue a permit to a tow truck that exceeds a mass and/or dimension limit if the towed vehicle is disabled, i.e. has a mechanical failure or has been involved in an accident.

4.1.4 A tow truck that is within the statutory mass and dimension limits, with the towed vehicle connected, does not require a permit to operate.

4.2 Considerations before Issuing a Permit

4.2.1 There are a number of safety and road infrastructure considerations relating to towing a disabled vehicle, including the following:

- (a) The rating of the steer axle and other components to which an under-lift towing mechanism is attached may not be adequately rated and able to sustain the forces required to pull the vehicle or vehicle combination;
- (b) Rear axle and tyre ratings of the disabled motor vehicle may not be adequate to accommodate the transfer of mass resulting from lifting the front of a vehicle that is loaded or still connected to a fully loaded trailer;
- (c) The rear axles of the disabled motor vehicle are likely to become overloaded and contravene statutory or permit mass limits;
- (d) Bridges need to be assessed for the additional mass and changes to mass distribution;
- (e) The stability of the vehicle or vehicle combination will be compromised when attached to a heavy lift tow truck;
- (f) The swept path will be adversely impacted by the additional vehicle length; and
- (g) The additional vehicle length may cause other issues, such as exceeding available stacking distances at railway crossings / intersections.

4.2.2 It is the responsibility of the tow truck driver and operator to ensure they are aware of the mass of the disabled vehicle and the ratings of the components supporting the mass when connected to the tow truck.

4.2.3 In many scenarios, under-lift towing will not be viable and the disabled vehicle will need to be flat towed, similar to if a block truck was towing the vehicle. Where the disabled vehicle is being flat towed, the heavy lift tow truck must have a minimum of 14 tonnes on a tandem drive axle group or 17 tonnes on a tri drive axle group.

4.2.4 Where a disabled motor vehicle is being flat towed, a competent and qualified person must be in the towed vehicle to control it while on tow.

4.3 Towing a Compliant Motor Vehicle or Trailer

A heavy lift tow truck towing a disabled vehicle that is within statutory mass and dimension limits itself, however causes the tow truck to exceed statutory mass limits on the drive axle group, must operate under a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Overmass Period Permit* or a *Single Trip Permit*.

4.4 Towing Oversize and/or Overmass Vehicles

- 4.4.1 A tow truck towing a disabled vehicle that is overmass due to its load, where it is not practical to remove the load, must obtain a *Single Trip Permit*.
- 4.4.2 A tow truck towing a disabled vehicle carrying an oversize load, where it is not practical to remove the load, may operate under a *Class 1 Oversize Period Permit*, provided the tow truck and towed vehicle are within statutory mass limits and within the dimension limits allowed under the permit.
- 4.4.3 A tow truck towing a disabled vehicle carrying an oversize load that is exceeding statutory mass limits and/or is outside the dimension limits allowed under the *Class 1 Oversize Period Permit*, must obtain a *Single Trip Permit*.
- 4.4.4 A tow truck towing a disabled oversize special purpose vehicle may operate under a *Class 1 Oversize Period Permit*, provided the tow truck and towed vehicle are within statutory mass limits and within the dimension limits allowed under the permit.
- 4.4.5 A tow truck towing a disabled special purpose vehicle that is exceeding statutory mass limits and/or is outside the dimension limits allowed under the *Class 1 Oversize Period Permit*, must obtain a *Single Trip Permit*.

5 ARTICULATED VEHICLES AND VEHICLE COMBINATIONS

5.1 Towing an Articulated Vehicle

- 5.1.1 The definition of an articulated vehicle in the *Road Traffic Code 2000* refers to a motor vehicle with a pivot point between the front and rear wheels, such as an articulated bus or articulated mobile crane.
- 5.1.2 Regulation 418 of the *Road Traffic (Vehicles) Regulations 2014* stipulates that a WA police officer or the Commissioner of Main Roads may give permission to tow a disabled articulated vehicle to a place where it will not constitute a hazard, if it is considered unsafe to uncouple the vehicle to tow part of the vehicle only.
- 5.1.3 HVS will provide such permission to enable a heavy lift tow truck to tow a disabled articulated vehicle, if it considered the safest option and if deemed appropriate, will permit the articulated vehicle to be towed to a place of repair.
- 5.1.4 If permission is granted, HVS will provide written authorisation, which may be in the form of a permit or an email in urgent situations.

5.2 Towing a Vehicle Combination

- 5.2.1 Regulation 279 of the *Road Traffic Code 2000* stipulates a person must not drive any vehicle to which more than one other vehicle is directly or indirectly attached, without approval from the Commissioner of Main Roads.
- 5.2.2 In most cases, a heavy lift tow truck towing a vehicle combination will exceed statutory mass and/or dimension limits, therefore will require a permit.
- 5.2.3 HVS will only allow a heavy lift tow truck to tow a disabled vehicle combination if this is deemed to be the safest option. However, in most cases it is a much safer option to disconnect the prime mover and tow the disabled vehicle separately.

5.2.4 Permission will only be granted for a disabled vehicle combination to be towed if it is causing a serious safety hazard and the prime mover cannot be replaced safely at that location. Permission will only be granted to move the disabled vehicle combination as far as necessary, so the vehicle no longer constitutes a hazard to traffic or to any person.

5.3 Semi-trailers without Landing Legs

5.3.1 A semi-trailer that is not fitted with landing legs is not considered justification for not disconnecting the prime mover and a Heavy Lift Tow Truck towing a vehicle combination.

5.3.2 If a transport operator makes the business decision to build trailers without landing legs, they then have an obligation to ensure they have appropriate procedures in place to manage an incident where there is a need to disconnect the trailer. Relying on a Heavy Lift Tow Truck to tow the vehicle combination is not considered an appropriate procedure.

6 TOWING AN OVERSIZE VEHICLE ON A FREEWAY

There are provisions in the *Class 1 Oversize Period Permit* that allow an oversize vehicle to travel on a Freeway at night between 9:30pm and 5:00am. Outside of these times, there should not be any oversize vehicles on a Freeway, therefore no need for a tow truck to tow a disabled oversize vehicle. However, accident damage may cause a vehicle to become oversize. If a heavy lift tow truck needs to tow a damaged vehicle outside of the allowable night hours and the vehicle exceeds a dimension limit as a result of the damage, HVS will provide written authorisation to tow the vehicle, which may be in the form of a permit or an email in urgent situations.

7 TOWING AN OVERSIZE VEHICLE AT NIGHT

There are provisions in the *Class 1 Oversize Period Permit* that allow oversize vehicles to travel at night. If a heavy lift tow truck needs to tow a disabled oversize vehicle outside of the allowable permit parameters at night, HVS may provide written authorisation, which may be in the form of a permit or an email in urgent situations. Authorisation will only be granted if it is considered dangerous for the vehicle to be left at the location until daylight, or other suitable justification is provided to HVS.

8 TOWING DANGEROUS GOODS VEHICLES

The Dangerous Goods Regulations require the prime contractor to remove the dangerous goods from a disabled vehicle before it is towed, unless this constitutes a greater risk than leaving the dangerous goods on the vehicle. Replacing the disabled prime mover with an operational prime mover, i.e. removing the dangerous goods from the disabled prime mover by disconnecting the trailer, is not considered a greater risk than a heavy lift tow truck towing the vehicle combination loaded with dangerous goods.

9 GENERAL CONTACT DETAILS

During the following business hours, contact HVS on 138 486 or by emailing hvs@mainroads.wa.gov.au :

7am - 6:00 pm Monday - Friday

7am - 3:30pm Weekends and Public Holidays

10 EMERGENCY AFTER-HOURS CONTACT

If an authorisation or permit is required after-hours, contact the Main Roads Customer Information Centre on 138 138 who will make direct contact with the on-call after-hours officer.

11 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following documents relate to these Guidelines and are available on the Main Roads website:

Document Number	Description
D16#399257	Class 1 Oversize Period Permit Operating Conditions
D19#696602	Single Trip OSOM Standards Operating Conditions