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Tow Truck Licensing and Permit Requirements Guidelines

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1	30/06/2023	Updated document to align with revised HLTT Period Permit Operating Conditions.	All

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
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 Tow	A method of towing a disabled vehicle using a rigid drawbar, where the tow truck assumes the function of a block truck. All wheels of the towed vehicle remain on the ground and the steering of the towed vehicle is controlled by a competent person.
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.
Overmass Vehicle	A vehicle operating under an overmass permit, such as a <i>Single Trip Overmass Permit</i> , an <i>Overmass Low Loader Period Permit</i> or a <i>Special Purpose Vehicle Permit</i> .
Oversize Vehicle	A vehicle operating under an oversize permit, such as a <i>Class 1 RAV Oversize Period Permit</i> or a <i>Single Trip Oversize Permit</i> .
Partial Lift Tow	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.
Permit	A permit issued by HVS under the provisions of Part 4 of the <i>Road Traffic (Vehicles) Act 2012</i> .
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.

Term	Definition
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 or vehicle combinations.

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.

2.2 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, or to move the disabled vehicle between places of repair.

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 mass and mass distribution of the towed vehicle is often unknown and therefore it is difficult for the tow truck driver to establish how the mass will be transferred onto the tow truck;

(b) There is a high risk of the driver axles of the tow truck being overloaded and the steer axle being underloaded, resulting in poor steering and braking performance;

(c) Coupling ratings may be exceeded;

(d) Bridges may need to be assessed for the additional mass and changes to mass distribution;

(e) The stability of the vehicle or vehicle combination may be compromised when attached to a heavy lift tow truck;

(f) The swept path may 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 partial lift towed or flat towed, similar to if a block truck was towing the vehicle. Where the disabled vehicle is being partial lift towed or 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 Vehicle other than an Oversize or Overmass Vehicle

A heavy lift tow truck towing a disabled vehicle that is not an oversize or overmass vehicle, however when coupled to the tow truck the combination exceeds a statutory mass and/or dimension limit, must operate under a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Period Permit* or a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Single Movement Permit*.

4.4 Towing Oversize and/or Overmass Vehicles

4.4.1 A tow truck towing a disabled overmass vehicle, 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, must obtain a *Single Trip Permit*.

4.4.3 A tow truck towing a disabled special purpose vehicle that is exceeding statutory mass limits, 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 A heavy lift tow truck towing a disabled articulated vehicle must operate under a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Period Permit* or a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Single Movement Permit*

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 A heavy lift tow truck towing a disabled vehicle combination must operate under a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Period Permit* or a *Heavy Lift Tow Truck Single Movement Permit*

6 TOWING A DISABLED VEHICLE ON A FREEWAY

6.1.1 A heavy lift tow truck must not tow a heavy vehicle or vehicle combination on a Freeway, unless removing a disabled vehicle from the Freeway.

6.1.2 When removing a disabled heavy vehicle or vehicle combination from a Freeway, the heavy lift tow truck must exit via the nearest off-ramp that provides access to an approved road for the type of vehicle being towed.

7 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.

8 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

9 EMERGENCY AFTER-HOURS CONTACT

If a 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.

10 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

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

Document Number	Description
D21#1156511	Procedure for Heavy Lift Tow Truck Single Movement Approvals
D19#696602	Single Trip OSOM Standards Operating Conditions