

Motor Vehicle Division Information Memo # 19-25
2019 Legislation – Weight Limits for Transporting Raw Forest Products and a Single Statewide Permitting System

DATE: June 17, 2019

FROM: Sara Siedsma, Compliance Officer, MVD

TO: All Vehicle and Motor Carrier Services staff

SUBJECT

This informational memo explains legislation enacted during the 2019 legislative session relating to permits for vehicles of excessive size and weight, including vehicles transporting raw forest products.

SUMMARY

Senate File 629 amended several Iowa Code sections related to vehicles of excessive size and weight. The bill can be divided into two parts, one part dealing with transporting raw forest products, and the second part dealing with a single statewide permitting system.

The raw forest products part of the bill does the following:

- Amends section 321.463 to allow permitted divisible loads of lumber with a maximum of no more than 20,000 pounds per axle. While 20,000 pounds is already the current limit for most permitted vehicles, this change adds divisible loads of lumber to those types of loads that may be permitted for higher gross weights.
- Amends section 321E.7 to include permitted vehicles transporting raw forest products among the list of vehicles that may have at least one tandem axle on the truck tractor and one tandem axle on the trailer that does not exceed 46,000 pounds, provided each tandem axle has at least four tires and all other axle do not exceed the limits of 20,000 pounds per single axle. This does not create a new legal configuration or axle weight limit, but just extends an existing one to vehicles transporting raw forest products.
- Amends section 321E.9 to deem containerized shipments of raw forest products (i.e., raw forest products loaded in sealed containers for international shipment) as indivisible loads. This is significant because chapter 321E only allows indivisible loads to be permitted for weights above 80,000 pounds.
- Amends section 321E.14 to establish an annual overweight permit fee of \$175 for raw forest products.
- Adds new section 321E.26 that authorizes us to issue annual overweight permits for vehicles transporting divisible loads of raw forest products from fields to storage, processing, or to other commercial facilities if the vehicle meets the legal axle weights set for in sections 321.463 and 321E.7. This new section also states permits issued under this section are valid on routes that are not on the primary system (i.e., local roads on the city or county system) if the local authority that has jurisdiction over the route has approved the route for the permit.

The single statewide permitting system part of the bill does the following:

- Requires us to develop a single statewide permitting system for vehicles of excess size and weight operated on local and state highways. This provision requires us to work with local jurisdictions to establish appropriate routes and charge fees that can be split between the state and local jurisdictions. The purpose of this provision is to make permitting and routing more efficient and consistent, and to avoid a carrier having to go to us and multiple counties and cities to complete the permitting and routing for a single trip. We are required to submit a report to the legislature by December 31, 2021 regarding the implementation status of developing the statewide permit system.

The legislation is effective July 1, 2019. However, the requirement to develop a single statewide permitting system will take time; the legislation requires a report on the status of our development of a single statewide permitting system to be submitted by December 31, 2021.

LINK TO LEGISLATION

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGE/88/SF629.pdf>

CURRENT

Raw forest products:

Current law does not allow the transportation of divisible loads under an overweight permit, with certain exceptions.

Single statewide permitting system:

Current law does not provide for a single statewide permit system for vehicles of excessive size and weight. Rather, a carrier planning a single trip using a vehicle of excessive size and weight must obtain permits from us and multiple local jurisdictions.

NEW

Raw forest products:

The new legislation addresses the barriers in current law to the transportation of raw forest products by allowing the transportation of overweight divisible loads of raw forest products while operating under a permit, and also deeming containerized shipments of raw forest products (i.e., raw forest products loaded in sealed containers for international shipment) as indivisible loads. Defining this product as an indivisible load provides us with the ability to issue a single trip oversize/overweight permit for these loads, which is an important part of the strategy for getting raw forest products to market.

Single statewide permitting system:

The legislation presents us with the opportunity to work with local jurisdictions to establish a single statewide permit system for vehicles of excessive size and weight. The DOT has identified John Selmer (Strategic Performance Division) and Alex Jansen (Vehicle and Motor Carrier Services Bureau) to lead the development of a concept of operations that will involve many business areas in the DOT. Part of the development will involve identifying business requirements, so we can specifically determine what

information and roads the system will include, and how the system will function. We expect to have the concept of operations completed in the next nine to twelve months, and the entire project will likely be a multi-year effort. While the legislation does not outline a specific implementation date for the single statewide permit system, we are required to provide a status report regarding our progress to the legislature by December 31, 2021.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Raw forest products:

This directive will require us to revise our permit system to accommodate raw forest products as provided under this bill.

Single statewide permitting system:

The bill will also require us to begin working on developing a single statewide permit system and to provide a report of the status of the implementation of that system to the legislature by December 31, 2021.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions and answers provide additional information that will be helpful to you and to customers.

WHAT TYPES OF PERMITS WILL BE ISSUED?

SF629 authorizes us to issue annual permits for the transportation of raw forest products. The permits will be valid for one year from the date of issuance and will cost \$175. The permits will be valid for overweight only (dimensions must be legal) with a maximum gross weight of 156,000 pounds and a maximum single axle weight of 20,000 pounds, with up to two tandem axles allowed a maximum of 46,000 pounds per 321E.7.

WHAT ARE “RAW FOREST PRODUCTS”?

321E.26 defines “raw forest products” as logs, pilings, posts, poles, cordwood products, wood chips, sawdust, pulpwood, intermediary lumber, fuel wood, mulch, tree bark, and Christmas trees not altered by a manufacturing process off the land, sawmill, or factory from which the products were taken.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT THAN OUR CURRENT CONTAINER POLICY?

Our current practice is based on policy guidance from the Federal Highway Administration from the 1980s that allows for the transportation of “sealed ocean containers.” The intent of this legislation was to codify our practice in Iowa law while also setting clear requirements for industry and law enforcement on the exact requirements that apply when transporting these containers based on best practices in other jurisdictions.

While the legislative language that was enacted limits the container language to just raw forest products, this was not the intent and we will be seeking a future correction to the language to include all materials. Until the language is corrected to apply to more than just containers of raw forest products, we will continue to operate as we always have for those other products.

WHEN WILL WE DEVELOP A SINGLE STATEWIDE PERMITTING SYSTEM?

Developing a single statewide permitting system will be an agency-wide effort that will require a great deal of research and planning as well as input from local jurisdictions. As mentioned above, cross-divisional work group has been established to facilitate the planning efforts for the development of this system.