

# Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass Amendment [(No 2) 2009]

## Questions and Answers

### **Q1 Why is the amendment Rule being proposed?**

The amendment Rule will make changes to *Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2002* (Rule 41001) (the Rule) to allow some heavy vehicles to operate at higher mass limits than they are currently allowed. It will also allow an increase in length for some vehicles to operate without a permit. Under permit, some vehicles will be able to carry divisible loads outside the current maximum mass and dimension limits. The proposed changes to the Rule will allow significant productivity improvements in the operation of heavy vehicles.

### **Q2 What is the current weight limit for vehicles on New Zealand roads?**

The current gross weight limits depend on the number and layout of the axles. The heaviest permitted weight without a special permit is 44 tonnes.

### **Q3 Why is work on a permit system that will allow increased mass and dimensions being done?**

The projected doubling of the freight task (total tonnage multiplied by total distance) over the next 20 years means freight needs to be moved as efficiently as possible.

An increase in the mass and dimension limits for heavy vehicles has been shown in trials to improve vehicle productivity by increasing load capacity and reducing the number of vehicle movements required to distribute that freight. This, in turn, reduces fuel consumption, reduces emissions, improves safety and overall contributes positively to the Government's efficiency and productivity objectives.

### **Q4 Where did this idea originate?**

The idea was originally raised by the trucking industry. In addition, the Ministry of Transport and the NZ Transport Agency (formerly Land Transport NZ and Transit NZ) have investigated options for increasing heavy vehicle limits for some time.

### **Q5 Does this mean that there will be bigger trucks on the roads?**

Generally, no. Trucks will not be any wider or higher than current limits, but some small increases in overall length are proposed. The Rule amendment will allow an increase in length for some vehicles to operate without a permit as well as provide for others to apply to operate at longer lengths under a permit. The latter will be considered on a case-by-case basis where routes are suitable for increased length and vehicle safety would not be made worse through increased length. Longer trucks can be safer because the load height can be reduced and the vehicle is, therefore, more stable during cornering.

### **Q6 Will the vehicles carrying heavier loads be safe?**

Yes. The vehicles will be required to meet all the current safety standards. The increase in the mass of existing vehicles could have an impact on their centre of gravity and the operational Static Rollover Threshold (SRT), and, in some cases, this may require adjustments to driving techniques, particularly in relation to cornering. However, the vehicles will still be required to meet the established standards for the SRT. The NZTA will work with the transport sector to ensure any driver education or training issues are addressed.

### **Q7 Are there restrictions on what roads/routes the heavier vehicles can travel (i.e. near schools, quiet country roads, narrow windy roads etc.)?**

Vehicles issued with a permit will be restricted to specific routes. Roads and routes deemed inappropriate will not be used. All routes will be assessed on the overweight

permit criteria to ensure that the road infrastructure, and in particular any bridges, are able to cope with the heavier vehicles.

**Q8 What would a permit system for heavy vehicles achieve?**

Improved heavy vehicle productivity under the right conditions will enable a given amount of freight to be carried on fewer trucks. This will help to reduce road congestion, operating costs, vehicle emissions and the number and social cost of crashes involving trucks.

**Q9 Why not provide open access for road transport operators?**

Open access was not considered primarily because not all roads and routes are suitable for heavier vehicles. In some cases, road and bridge infrastructure is not of a standard that heavier vehicles could safely use it.

**Q10 How do you know a permit system will work?**

During 2008 and early 2009, a heavy vehicle trial project was carried out across a number of areas in New Zealand to assess the effectiveness of a permit system. The trials indicated that a permit system based on particular vehicles operating on specified routes allowed significant productivity benefits to be realised without any detrimental safety or environmental effects.

**Q11 How will the permit system be policed?**

The permit system will be monitored by the Commercial Vehicle Inspection Unit of the NZ Police as part of its normal road policing function.

**Q12 Heavier loads will mean extra road maintenance costs: who will pay for that?**

The Government is aware of the concerns road controlling authorities have about the possibility of extra road maintenance costs over time and continues to work closely with the NZ Transport Agency and local authorities on this issue.

**Q13 Will the operation of heavier vehicles increase greenhouse gas emissions?**

Heavier vehicles use more fuel than lighter vehicles, but the difference is small. It will usually be outweighed by the greater load on each truck and the consequent lower trip numbers. This will bring about an overall reduction in emissions.

During the trials, emissions from both heavier and existing trucks were measured to assess if there is any measurable or significant difference in emissions. Differences in emissions between 44-tonne and 50-tonne vehicles were found to be negligible.

**Q14 What kind of loads will these trucks be carrying?**

At present there are no plans to restrict the types of load that heavier trucks may carry.

**Q15 Will these trucks still be able to go on the ferry?**

Yes, heavier trucks will be able to use ferries – subject to the ferry carrying capability.

**Q16 Will they fit through tunnels and can all bridges take heavier trucks?**

Heavier vehicles operating under the permit system will be no higher or wider than existing trucks. Some bridges already have weight restrictions and these will continue to apply. However, many bridges on state highways and local roads are already adequate for heavier trucks. Other bridges may be strengthened, replaced or closed to heavier trucks.

**Q17 What will happen to the present system of overweight permits?**

The existing overweight system will continue to be used for one-off trips for individual overweight loads. The new system will be used to permit multiple and ongoing trips by nominated trucks operating a particular load (divisible) and route or area.

**Q18 There is a view that the public doesn't like heavy vehicles – how will this be managed?**

The Government is very aware of possible public concerns about heavier trucks on the road. These concerns were taken into account during the trials and the development of the amendment to the Rule. To allay public concerns about environmental and safety issues the Ministry commissioned studies related to the noise, vibrations, emissions and safety implications of operating heavier vehicles. These studies showed that there were no discernable changes in environmental factors and that heavier vehicles can be upgraded so that braking and towing safety performance is maintained.

As well as this, a survey of the public's perceptions of heavy vehicles was undertaken and the results of this showed that 71% of motorists surveyed viewed sharing the road with trucks either positively or were neutral in their response.

**Q19 How do I apply for a permit?**

You will need to provide details of your vehicle, the mass you wish to operate at (refer to the Rule for maximum allowed masses under permit for your particular vehicle configuration) and route you wish to travel on to the relevant road controlling authority; usually either NZ Transport Agency for State Highways or local councils for local roads).

**Q20 How long will it take to get a permit and what will it cost?**

It is expected that it will take no more than 28 days to process a permit application. The exact length of time will depend on the complexity of the route assessment, the number of applications received and the general workload of the issuing authority. A permit fee has not yet been established. However, a common fixed application fee will be set for each permit applied for. The overall fees collected will be appropriate to cover the cost of processing the permits, including route assessments.

**Q21 Will I always get a permit?**

No. Some applications will not be acceptable primarily because of infrastructure limitations and/or safety reasons. The reasons for declining an application will be notified to the applicant.

**Q22 What happens if I am caught either over my permitted mass, or on a road that is not included in my permit?**

If your vehicle is over-loaded, you will be fined for the difference between what you are weighed at and the standard allowed value in Schedule 2 of the Rule. If you are found to be off-route, the outcome will depend on the reason. In most cases, you will be fined, as stated earlier. However, if you have been diverted by Police it is possible that no further action will be taken, as long as you have complied with any bridge restrictions on the alternative route. This may mean you have to park the vehicle until the permit route re-opens or you may have to back-track to get onto another route of sufficient capacity. Immediate revocation of permits will also be possible for breach of permit conditions.

**Q23 How will the police know that a heavy vehicle travelling on a road is operating under one of these permits?**

The Police will have to pull the vehicle over and check the permit paperwork that must be carried in the vehicle.

**Q24 What is the legal authority for the amendment Rule?**

Section 152 of the *Land Transport Act 1998* allows the Minister of Transport to make ordinary rules assisting land transport safety and security, including (but not limited to) personal security. Section 155 of the Act allows the making of Rules setting out standards and requirements concerning vehicles, their systems, components, fittings or equipment.

**Q25 When will the proposed changes come into force?**

Subject to Government approval, the amendment Rule will come into force in February 2010.

Consultation details

**Q26 Where can I get printed versions of the proposed amendment Rule?**

A printed copy of the draft Rule and overview may be obtained by calling the NZ Transport Agency Contact Centre on Freephone 0800 699 000. The draft amendment Rule and the accompanying consultation material can also be found online at [www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/vehicle-dimension-and-mass-amendment/index.html](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/vehicle-dimension-and-mass-amendment/index.html).

**Q27 Does the draft amendment Rule give me all the information I need to fully understand what is proposed?**

Because this is an amendment Rule, it contains only the proposed amending provisions. However, the accompanying overview provides information about why the amendments are required. A full copy of the 2002 Vehicle Dimensions and Mass Rule can be found online at [www.landtransport.govt.nz/rules](http://www.landtransport.govt.nz/rules). Printed copies of Rules can be purchased at selected bookshops that sell legislation and most Rules can also be ordered direct from Wickliffe Limited, PO Box 932, Dunedin.

**Q28 How long do I have to make a submission?**

Submissions on the draft amendment Rule close on 24 July 2009.

ENDS