

Motor Vehicle Size & Weight Regulations

Minn. Stat. §§ 169.80-169.88

HOUSE RESEARCH

The following tables summarize many of the size and weight regulations that apply to motor vehicles operated on public roads. These are contained in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 169. The tables reflect four general parts that the regulations can be divided into:

- 1) limits on vehicle dimensions (namely, height, width, and length);
- 2) basic vehicle weight limits, which form the core limitations on motor vehicle weight;
- 3) weight limit adjustments that raise or lower allowed weights, provided automatically under some situations; and
- 4) special permits allowing increased weights, provided by application under specific circumstances.

Note that most of the regulations identified in the tables carry additional requirements and details. Also, the summary does not discuss some related regulations (such as for load securement and record keeping).

Maximum Dimension Limits¹

Dimension Limit	Limitations ²	Comments	Citation
Height	13 ft., 6 in.	Exceptions for double-deck buses, implements of husbandry ³ , certain farm vehicles transporting baled hay	169.81, subd. 1; 169.862, subd. 2 (f)
Width	8 ft., 6 in.	Exceptions for certain vehicles transporting sewage sludge, certain low bed trailers or dollies, passenger buses, implements of husbandry, certain farm vehicles transporting baled hay	169.80, subd. 2; 169.862, subd. 2 (f)
Length of single vehicle	45 ft.	Exception for mobile cranes	169.81, subd. 2
Length of vehicle combinations ⁴	75 ft.	Exceptions for transporting certain poles and pipes, certain vehicle combinations operated on divided highways, certain saddlemount combinations	169.81, subd. 3; 23 CFR § 658.13 (e) (1) (iii)
Length of various trailers	45 – 53 ft.	Length limit depends on type of trailer; certain trailers in three-vehicle combinations can not exceed 28 ½ ft.	169.81, subds. 2-3; 169.86, subd. 1
Length of recreational vehicle combination	70 ft.		169.81, subd. 3c
Notes			
¹ Table does not identify various requirements and details associated with the dimension limits.			
² Limitations do not account for various special permits.			
³ “Implements of husbandry” are self-propelled or towed vehicles used for farming, timber, horticultural, or livestock operations (such as a tractor or combine harvester). Minn. Stat. § 169.011, subd. 35.			
⁴ “Vehicle combinations” are sets of vehicles transported together, with a towing unit and one or more trailers.			

Basic Vehicle Weight Limits¹

Type of Limit ²	Limitations	Comments	Citation
Per set of tires	Lesser of (1) manufacturer's rating, or (2) 500 or 600 pounds per in. of tire width ³	Weight on all adjacent tires at each end of an axle	169.823, subd. 1
Per wheel	9,000 lbs. on unpaved roads; 10,000 lbs. on paved roads	Weight on all adjacent tires at each end of an axle	169.823, subd. 1
Per axle	18,000 lbs. on unpaved roads; 20,000 lbs. on paved roads	Weight on an axle	169.824
Per axle grouping	Varies with number of axles and distances between axle groups	Different limits apply to all groupings of consecutive axles	169.824
Gross vehicle weight	Varies with number of axles and distances between axle groups; example: 80,000 lbs. on a five-axle vehicle	Total vehicle weight limit on all axles	169.824

Notes

¹ Table does not identify various weight limit adjustments and special permits.

² A vehicle must comply with each type of weight limit listed.

³ Tire weight limit of 600 pounds per inch of tire width only applies to the foremost and rearmost steering axles.

Weight Limit Adjustments

Type of Adjustment	Description of Change	Applies To	Citation
Winter load increase	10% weight limit increase during winter dates set by MnDOT in six zones	All vehicles generally	169.826, subd. 1
Harvest season increase	10% weight limit increase from beginning of harvest to Nov. 30	Certain vehicles transporting sugar beets, carrots, or potatoes; permit required	169.826, subd. 2
Spring load restrictions	Weight limit decrease on unpaved roads during spring, to (1) 5 tons per axle, and (2) 5/9ths of original weight limits for all axle groupings	All vehicles generally; exceptions for certain school buses, vehicles transporting milk, utility vehicles, and garbage and recycling vehicles	169.87, subds. 2, 3-6
Optional route restriction	Weight limit reduction on routes to prevent roadway damage, if set and posted by a road authority	All vehicles generally; exceptions for certain school buses, vehicles transporting milk, utility vehicles, and garbage and recycling vehicles	169.87, subds. 1, 3-6
Idle/emissions reduction technology	Weight limit increase up to 400 lbs. for idle-reduction or emissions-reduction technology	All vehicles generally	169.824, subd. 2
Tow truck exemption	Weight limits not applicable	Certain tow trucks with urgent movements	169.829, subd. 2
Utility vehicle exemption	Weight limits not applicable	Certain utility vehicles not exceeding 20,000 lbs. per axle	169.829, subd. 3

Special Permits¹

Type of Permit	Allows	Applies To	Citation
Oversize/ Overweight	General oversize or overweight transport	Various vehicles transporting nondivisible loads	169.86, subd. 1 [pre-1980]
Livestock hauling	88,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight on six-axle (or more) vehicles	Exclusive noninterstate transport of livestock	169.824, subd. 2 [2005]
Forest products	90,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight on six-axle (or more) vehicles	Certain vehicles transporting unfinished forest products or lumber	169.8261 [2004]
Pulpwood vehicle	Various increased tire weights and 82,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight on six-axle vehicles	Certain vehicles transporting pole-length pulpwood	169.863 [1989]
Paper products vehicle: three-unit	108,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight	Certain three-vehicle combinations on specific trunk highways	169.864, subd. 1 [2005]
Paper products vehicle: two-unit	90,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight, or 97,000 lbs. on seven-axle vehicles	Certain vehicle combinations	169.864, subd. 2 [2005]
Farm products: six-axle	90,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight on six-axle (or more) vehicles	Vehicles transporting raw or unprocessed agricultural products	169.865, subd. 1 [2008]
Farm products: seven-axle	97,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight on seven-axle (or more) vehicles	Vehicles transporting raw or unprocessed agricultural products	169.865, subd. 2 [2008]
Canola hauling vehicle	105,500 lbs. gross vehicle weight	Certain three-vehicle combinations on specific trunk highways	169.866 [2008]
Baled farm products	Up to 12 ft. width and 14 ½ ft. height to transport baled hay, straw, or cornstalks	All vehicles generally	169.862 [1979]
Snow plows	Up to 10 ft. width	Vehicles with a snow plow blade	169.86, subd. 1b [1997]
Tow trucks	Exceed length and weight limits	Tow trucks	169.86, subd. 8 [2008]

Note

¹ Table does not identify various requirements and details associated with the special permits.