

New weight restrictions for manure hauling equipment

In the past agricultural loads have been exempt from weight restrictions on the roads. This has led manufactures to build large manure tank wagons that have been responsible for some road damage. A general rule is that 1,000 gallons will weigh about 10,000 lb. for the liquid and the tank combined. Using this approximation a 6,000-gallon tank would weigh 60,000 lb. A 15,000-gallon manure tank weighs approximately 150,000 lb. without the tractor.

A recently passed bill in the Iowa Legislature (House File 651) affects weight limits of all agricultural vehicles on embargoed bridges and culverts. In addition this bill and a second bill (House File 2368, 2000) specify future axle and vehicle weight limits for manure tank wagons, grain carts, and fence-line feed wagons.

Weight restrictions for agricultural implements on bridges and culverts

Effective July 1, 1999, all agricultural vehicles (e.g. tractors, combines, implements, chemical applicators) are required to comply with weight embargoes imposed by local authorities or the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) on a bridge or culvert within their jurisdiction (in the past, weight limits did not apply to many agricultural vehicles). Restrictions on weight loads for bridges and culverts are in effect when signs are posted. The authority imposing the weight restriction

(local or IDOT) must issue a special, short-term (8-week) permit if an agricultural hardship exists. This permit may allow a producer to overload a bridge but if the bridge breaks the producer is totally responsible for all of the repairs.

Implements loaded on hauling units are exempted from weight restrictions if being transported for repair.

Weight restrictions for grain carts, tank wagons, and feed wagons on public roadways

Agricultural implements applying organic plant food materials (e.g. manure; i.e. tank wagons), grain carts with a non-steerable axle, and equipment mixing and dispensing feed to feedlot (beef or dairy) cattle (i.e. fence-line feeder wagons) will be required to comply with the following axle weight restrictions when operated on public roadways in the future.

Maximum gross vehicle weight is limited to 96,000 lb. Maximum weight of any single axle is limited to 24,000 lb from February 1–May 31 or 28,000 lb from June 1–January 31. Grain carts, tank wagons, and feeder wagons manufactured on or after July 1, 2001 are to comply with these weight requirements. All other grain carts, tank wagons, and feeder wagons (i.e. those manufactured before July 1, 2001) are to be in compliance by July 1, 2005 in order to travel public roadways. These weight restrictions on public roadways do not affect existing weight restrictions for agricultural implements on bridges and culverts.

House File 651 reaffirms an existing requirement that implements applying inorganic or commercial plant food materials, agricultural chemicals, or limestone are currently required to comply with legal axle weight restrictions when operated on public roadways.

A slow-moving vehicle emblem (SMV) is to be displayed on all agricultural vehicles at speeds of 35 mph or less.

Because information on road damage by vehicles using rubber tracks is not currently well documented, the IDOT in consultation with interested farm groups is working to determine the extent of the damage caused by this equipment. A report with findings and recommendations is to be submitted to the Legislature in January 2001.

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