
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5681

State of Washington

57th Legislature

2001 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Kastama, Horn, Haugen and Oke; by request of Washington State Patrol)

READ FIRST TIME 03/08/01.

1 AN ACT Relating to weight limits for fire-fighting apparatus;
2 amending RCW 46.44.091; adding a new section to chapter 46.44 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The purpose of this act is to provide
6 flexibility for the department of transportation to adopt rules that
7 will allow certain fire-fighting apparatuses to operate on state and
8 local highways if they exceed existing gross weight limits currently
9 established in statute. The legislature recognizes that, due to their
10 nature of operation, fire-fighting apparatuses do not significantly
11 contribute to the deterioration of surface roadways. The legislature
12 further recognizes that any exemption or special permit that would
13 allow the apparatuses to operate on state and local highways should
14 also consider any bridge located in the designated fire service area to
15 assure that the exemption or special permit will not result in any
16 potential damage to a bridge or similar structure. The legislature
17 further recognizes that any exemption or special permit granted as a
18 result of this act must not compromise existing state and federal
19 safety standards.

1 **Sec. 2.** RCW 46.44.091 and 1989 c 52 s 1 are each amended to read
2 as follows:

3 (1) Except as otherwise provided in subsections (3) and (4) of this
4 section, no special permit shall be issued for movement on any state
5 highway or route of a state highway within the limits of any city or
6 town where the gross weight, including load, exceeds the following
7 limits:

8 (a) Twenty-two thousand pounds on a single axle or on dual axles
9 with a wheelbase between the first and second axles of less than three
10 feet six inches;

11 (b) Forty-three thousand pounds on dual axles having a wheelbase
12 between the first and second axles of not less than three feet six
13 inches but less than seven feet;

14 (c) On any group of axles or in the case of a vehicle employing two
15 single axles with a wheel base between the first and last axle of not
16 less than seven feet but less than ten feet, a weight in pounds
17 determined by multiplying six thousand five hundred times the distance
18 in feet between the center of the first axle and the center of the last
19 axle of the group;

20 (d) On any group of axles with a wheel base between the first and
21 last axle of not less than ten feet but less than thirty feet, a weight
22 in pounds determined by multiplying two thousand two hundred times the
23 sum of twenty and the distance in feet between the center of the first
24 axle and the center of the last axle of the group;

25 (e) On any group of axles with a wheel base between the first and
26 last axle of thirty feet or greater, a weight in pounds determined by
27 multiplying one thousand six hundred times the sum of forty and the
28 distance in feet between the center of the first axle and the center of
29 the last axle of the group.

30 (2) The total weight of a vehicle or combination of vehicles
31 allowable by special permit under subsection (1) of this section shall
32 be governed by the lesser of the weights obtained by using the total
33 number of axles as a group or any combination of axles as a group.

34 (3) The weight limitations pertaining to single axles may be
35 exceeded to permit the movement of equipment operating upon single
36 pneumatic tires having a rim width of twenty inches or more and a rim
37 diameter of twenty-four inches or more or dual pneumatic tires having
38 a rim width of sixteen inches or more and a rim diameter of twenty-four

1 inches or more and specially designed vehicles manufactured and
2 certified for special permits prior to July 1, 1975.

3 (4) Permits may be issued for weights in excess of the limitations
4 contained in subsection (1) of this section on highways or sections of
5 highways which have been designed and constructed for weights in excess
6 of such limitations, or for any shipment duly certified as necessary by
7 military officials, or by officials of public or private power
8 facilities, or when in the opinion of the department of transportation
9 the movement or action is a necessary movement or action: PROVIDED,
10 That in the judgment of the department of transportation the structures
11 and highway surfaces on the routes involved are capable of sustaining
12 weights in excess of such limitations and it is not reasonable for
13 economic or operational considerations to transport such excess weights
14 by rail or water for any substantial distance of the total mileage
15 applied for.

16 (5) ~~((Permits may be issued for the operation of fire trucks on the
17 public highways if the maximum gross weight on any single axle does not
18 exceed twenty four thousand pounds and the gross weight on any tandem
19 axle does not exceed forty three thousand pounds.~~

20 (+6)) Application shall be made in writing on special forms
21 provided by the department of transportation and shall be submitted at
22 least thirty-six hours in advance of the proposed movement. An
23 application for a special permit for a gross weight of any combination
24 of vehicles exceeding two hundred thousand pounds shall be submitted in
25 writing to the department of transportation at least thirty days in
26 advance of the proposed movement.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 46.44 RCW
28 to read as follows:

29 (1) As used in this section, "fire-fighting apparatus" means a
30 vehicle or combination of vehicles, owned by a regularly organized fire
31 suppression agency, designed, maintained, and used exclusively for fire
32 suppression and rescue or for fire prevention activities. These
33 vehicles and associated loads or equipment are necessary to protect the
34 public safety and are considered nondivisible loads. A vehicle or
35 combination of vehicles that is not designed primarily for fire
36 suppression including, but not limited to, a hazardous materials
37 response vehicle, bus, mobile kitchen, mobile sanitation facility, and

1 heavy equipment transport vehicle is not a fire-fighting apparatus for
2 purposes of this section.

3 (2) Fire-fighting apparatus must comply with all applicable federal
4 and state vehicle operating and safety criteria, including rules
5 adopted by agencies within each jurisdiction.

6 (3) All owners and operators of fire-fighting apparatus shall
7 comply with current information, available through the department,
8 regarding the applicable load restrictions of state bridges within the
9 designated fire service area, including any automatic or mutual aid
10 agreement areas.

11 (4) Fire-fighting apparatus operating within a fire district
12 boundary of the owner of the apparatus, including any automatic or
13 mutual aid agreement areas, may operate without a permit if:

14 (a) The weight does not exceed:

15 (i) 600 pounds per inch width of tire;

16 (ii) 24,000 pounds on a single axle;

17 (iii) 43,000 pounds on a tandem axle set;

18 (iv) 67,000 pounds gross vehicle weight, subject to the gross
19 weight limits of RCW 46.44.091(1) (c), (d), and (e);

20 (v) The tire manufacturer's tire load rating.

21 (b) There is no tridem axle set.

22 (c) The dimensions do not exceed:

23 (i) 8 feet, 6 inches wide;

24 (ii) 14 feet high;

25 (iii) 50 feet overall length;

26 (iv) 15 foot front overhang;

27 (v) Rear overhang not exceeding the length of the wheel base.

28 (5) The department may grant permits for fire fighting apparatus
29 that exceed the weight limits in subsection (4) of this section only if
30 they were put into operation in this state before July 1, 2001. The
31 department shall issue the permit on an annual basis for the apparatus
32 to operate within the designated fire service area, including mutual
33 benefit agreement areas, subject to the applicable load restrictions of
34 state bridges referred to in subsection (3) of this section and any
35 other limitations stipulated on the permit. Before issuing a permit,
36 the department will compare the apparatus to be permitted with the
37 bridge load ratings for structures on state highways within the
38 operating area. The permit will denote any structures where access by

1 the apparatus is either based on special operating instructions or is
2 denied.

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