

**WAC 468-38-100 Pilot/escort vehicle and operator requirements.**

(1) A certified pilot/escort operator, acting as a warning necessary to provide safety to the traveling public, must accompany an extra-legal load when:

(a) The vehicle(s) or load exceeds 11 feet in width: Two pilot/escort vehicles are required on two lane highways, one in front and one at the rear.

(b) The vehicle(s) or load exceeds 14 feet in width: One escort vehicle is required at the rear on multilane highways.

(c) The vehicle(s) or load exceeds 20 feet in width: Two pilot/escort vehicles are required on multilane undivided highways, one in front and one at the rear.

(d) The trailer length, including load, of a tractor/trailer combination exceeds 105 feet, or when the rear overhang of a load measured from the center of the rear axle exceeds one-third of the trailer length including load of a tractor/trailer or truck/trailer combination: One pilot/escort vehicle is required at the rear on two-lane highways.

(e) The trailer length, including load, of a tractor/trailer combination exceeds 125 feet: One pilot/escort vehicle is required at the rear on multilane highways.

(f) The front overhang of a load measured from the center of the front steer axle exceeds 20 feet: One pilot/escort vehicle is required at the front on all two-lane highways.

(g) The rear overhang of a load on a single unit vehicle, measured from the center of the rear axle, exceeds 20 feet: One pilot/escort vehicle is required at the rear on two-lane highways.

(h) The height of the vehicle(s) or load exceeds 14 feet six inches: One pilot/escort vehicle with height measuring device (pole) is required at the front of the movement on all highways.

(i) The vehicle(s) or load exceeds 12 feet in width on a multi-lane highway and has a height that requires a front pilot/escort vehicle: One rear pilot/escort vehicle is required.

(j) The operator, using rearview mirrors, cannot see 200 feet to the rear of the vehicle or vehicle combination when measured from either side of the edge of the load or last vehicle in the combination, whichever is larger: One pilot/escort vehicle is required at the rear on all highways.

(k) In the opinion of the department, a pilot/escort vehicle(s) is necessary to protect the traveling public. Assignments of this nature must be authorized through the department's administrator for commercial vehicle services.

(2) **Can a pilot/escort vehicle be temporarily reassigned a position relative to the load during a move?** When road conditions dictate that the use of the pilot/escort vehicle in another position would be more effective, the pilot/escort vehicle may be temporarily reassigned. For example: A pilot/escort vehicle is assigned to the rear of an overlength load on a two-lane highway. The load is about to enter a highway segment that has curves significant enough to cause the vehicle and/or load to encroach on the oncoming lane of traffic. The pilot/escort vehicle may be temporarily reassigned to the front to warn oncoming traffic.

(3) **Can a certified flag person ever substitute for a pilot/escort vehicle?** In subsection (1)(d) and (e) of this section, the special permit may authorize a riding flag person, in lieu of a pilot/escort vehicle, to provide adequate traffic control for the configuration. The flag person is not required to ride in the pilot/escort ve-

hicle but may ride in the transport vehicle with transporter's authorization.

(4) **Must an operator of a pilot/escort vehicle be certified to operate in the state of Washington?** Yes. To help assure compliance with the rules of this chapter, consistent basic operating procedures are needed for pilot/escort vehicle operators to properly interact with the escorted vehicle and the surrounding traffic. Operators of pilot/escort vehicles, therefore, must be certified as having received department-approved base level training as a pilot/escort vehicle operator and must comply with the following:

(a) A pilot/escort vehicle operator with a Washington state driver's license must have a valid Washington state pilot/escort vehicle operator certificate/card which must be on the operator's person while performing escort vehicle operator duties.

(b) A pilot/escort vehicle operator with a driver's license from a jurisdiction other than the state of Washington may acquire a Washington state escort vehicle operator certificate/card, or operate with a certification from another jurisdiction approved by the department, subject to the periodic review of the issuing jurisdiction's certification program. A current list of approved programs will be maintained by the department's commercial vehicle services office.

(c) A pilot/escort vehicle operator certification does not exempt a pilot/escort operator from complying with all state laws and requirements of the state in which she/he is traveling.

(d) Every applicant for a state of Washington pilot/escort operator certificate shall attend an eight-hour initial training course or if renewing their certification, may attend a four-hour recertification course. Every applicant must attend a course offered and presented by a business, organization, government entity, or individual approved by the department. At the conclusion of the course, the applicant will be eligible to receive the certification card after successfully completing a written test with at least an 80 percent passing score. State of Washington pilot/escort vehicle operator certification cards must be renewed every three years.

(5) **What are the pretrip procedures that must be followed by the operator of a pilot/escort vehicle?**

(a) Discuss with the operator of the extra-legal vehicle the aspects of the move including, but not limited to, the vehicle configuration, the route, and the responsibilities that will be assigned or shared.

(b) Prerun the route, if necessary, to verify acceptable clearances.

(c) Review the special permit conditions with the operator of the extra-legal vehicle. When the permit is a single trip extra-legal permit, displaying routing information, the pilot/escort operator(s) must have a copy of the permit, including all special conditions and attachments.

(d) Determine proper position of required pilot/escort vehicles and set procedures to be used among the operators.

(e) Check mandatory equipment, provided in subsections (9) and (10) of this section. Each operator is responsible for his or her own vehicle.

(f) Check two-way communication system to ensure clear communications between the pilot/escort vehicle(s) and the transport vehicle and predetermine the channel to be used.

(g) Acknowledge that nonemergency electronic communication is prohibited except communication between pilot/escort operator(s) and the transport vehicle during movement.

(h) Adjust mirrors, mount signs and turn on lights, provided in subsections (8)(e) and (9)(a) and (b) of this section.

**(6) What are the responsibilities of the operator of a pilot/escort vehicle when assigned to be in front of the extra-legal movement?** The operator shall:

(a) Provide general warning to oncoming traffic of the presence of the permitted vehicle by use of signs and lights, provided in subsection (9) of this section;

(b) Notify the operator of the extra-legal vehicle, and the operator(s) of any trailing pilot/escort vehicle(s), about any condition that could affect either the safe movement of the extra-legal vehicle or the safety of the traveling public, in sufficient time for the operator of the extra-legal vehicle to take corrective action. Conditions requiring communication include, but are not limited to, road-surface hazards; overhead clearances; obstructions; traffic congestion; pedestrians; etc.;

(c) Provide guidance to the extra-legal vehicle through lane changes, egress from one designated route and access to the next designated route on the approved route itinerary, and around any obstacle;

(d) In the event of traffic buildup behind the extra-legal vehicle, locate a safe place adjacent to the highway where the extra-legal vehicle can make a temporary stop. Notify the operator of the extra-legal vehicle, and the operator(s) of any trailing pilot/escort vehicle(s), in sufficient time for the extra-legal vehicle to move out of the traffic flow into the safe place, allowing the following traffic to pass safely;

(e) In accordance with training, be far enough in front of the extra-legal vehicle to allow time for the extra-legal vehicle to stop or take corrective action as necessary when notified by the front pilot/escort operator. Be far enough in front of the extra-legal vehicle to signal oncoming traffic to stop in a safe and timely manner before entering any narrow structure or otherwise restricted highway where an extra-legal vehicle has entered and must clear before oncoming traffic can enter;

(f) In accordance with training, do not be any farther ahead of the extra-legal vehicle than is reasonably prudent, considering speed of the extra-legal vehicle, other traffic, and highway conditions. Do not exceed a distance between pilot/escort vehicle and extra-legal vehicle that would interfere with maintaining clear two-way radio communication; and

(g) Assist in guidance to a safe place, and/or traffic control, in instances when the extra-legal vehicle becomes disabled.

**(7) What are the responsibilities of the operator of a pilot/escort vehicle when assigned to be at the rear of the extra-legal movement?** The operator shall:

(a) Provide general warning to traffic approaching from the rear of the extra-legal vehicle ahead by use of signs and lights, provided in subsection (9) of this section;

(b) Notify the operator of the extra-legal vehicle, and the operator(s) of any leading pilot/escort vehicle(s), about any condition that could affect either the safe movement of the extra-legal vehicle or the safety of the traveling public, in sufficient time for the operator of the extra-legal vehicle to take corrective action. Condi-

tions requiring communication include, but are not limited to, objects coming loose from the extra-legal vehicle; flat tires on the extra-legal vehicle; rapidly approaching traffic or vehicles attempting to pass the extra-legal vehicle; etc.;

(c) Notify the operator of the extra-legal vehicle, and/or the operator of the lead pilot/escort vehicle, about traffic buildup or other delays to normal traffic flow resulting from the extra-legal move;

(d) In the event of traffic buildup behind the extra-legal vehicle, notify the operator of the extra-legal vehicle, and the operator(s) of any pilot/escort vehicle(s) in the lead, and assist the extra-legal vehicle in its move out of the traffic flow into the safe place, allowing the following traffic to pass safely;

(e) In accordance with training, be far enough behind the extra-legal vehicle to provide visual warning to approaching traffic to slow or stop in a timely manner, depending upon the action to be taken by the extra-legal vehicle, or the condition of the highway segment (i.e., limited sight distance, mountainous terrain, narrow corridor, etc.);

(f) Do not follow more closely than is reasonably prudent, considering the speed of the extra-legal vehicle, other traffic, and highway conditions. Do not exceed one-half mile distance between the pilot/escort vehicle and the extra-legal vehicle in order to maintain radio communication, except when necessary to safely travel a long narrow section of highway; and

(g) Pilot/escort operators shall not perform tillerman duties while performing escorting duties. For this section, tillerman refers to an individual that operates the steering of the trailer or trailing unit of the transport vehicle; and

(h) Assist in guidance to a safe place, and/or traffic control, in instances when the extra-legal vehicle becomes disabled.

**(8) What kind of vehicle can be used as a pilot/escort vehicle?**  
In addition to being in safe and reliable operating condition, the vehicle shall:

(a) Be either a single unit passenger car, including passenger van, or a two-axle truck, including a nonplacarded service truck;

(b) Not exceed a maximum gross vehicle weight or gross weight rating of 16,000 pounds;

(c) Have a body width of at least 60 inches but no greater than 102 inches;

(d) Not exceed the legal limits of size and weight, as defined in chapter 46.44 RCW;

(e) Be equipped with outside rear-view mirrors, located on each side of the vehicle; and

(f) Not tow a trailer while escorting.

**(9) In addition to equipment required by traffic law, what additional equipment is required on the vehicle when operating as a pilot/escort, and when is it used?**

(a) A minimum of one flashing or rotating amber (yellow) light or strobe, positioned above the roof line, visible from a minimum of 500 feet to approaching traffic from the front or rear of the vehicle and visible a full 360 degrees around the pilot/escort vehicle. Light bars, with appropriately colored lights, meeting the visibility minimums are acceptable. Lights must only be activated while escorting an extra-legal vehicle, or when used as traffic warning devices while stopped at the side of the road taking height measurements during the

prerunning of a planned route. The vehicle's headlights must also be activated while escorting an extra-legal vehicle.

(b) A sign reading "OVERSIZE LOAD," measuring at least five feet wide, 10 inches high with black lettering at least eight inches high in a one-inch brush stroke on yellow background. The sign shall be mounted over the roof of the vehicle and shall be displayed only while performing as the pilot/escort of an extra-legal load. When the vehicle is not performing as a pilot/escort, the sign must be removed, retracted or otherwise covered.

(c) A two-way radio communications system capable of providing reliable two-way voice communications, at all times, between the operators of the pilot/escort vehicle(s) and the extra-legal vehicle(s).

(d) Nonemergency electronic communications is prohibited except communication between the pilot/escort vehicle(s) and the transport vehicle during movement.

**(10) What additional or specialized equipment must be carried in a pilot/escort vehicle?**

(a) A standard 18-inch STOP AND SLOW paddle sign.

(b) Three bi-directional emergency reflective triangles.

(c) A minimum of one five-pound B, C fire extinguisher, or equivalent.

(d) For daytime and nighttime activities, a high visibility safety garment designed according to Class 2/3 specifications in ANSI/ISEA 107-2004, *American National Standard for High Visibility Safety Apparel*, to be worn when performing pilot/escort duties outside of the vehicle. The specifications at a minimum will meet the standard in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*.

(e) A highly visible colored hard hat, also to be worn when performing pilot/escort duties outside of the vehicle, per WAC 296-155-305.

(f) A height-measuring device (pole), which is nonconductive and nondestructive to overhead clearances, when required by the terms of the special permit. The upper portion of a height pole shall be constructed of flexible material to prevent damage to wires, lights, and other overhead objects or structures. The pole may be carried outside of the vehicle when not in use. See also subsection (14) of this section.

(g) First-aid supplies as prescribed in WAC 296-800-15020.

(h) A flashlight in good working order with red nose cone. Additional batteries should also be on hand.

**(11) Can the pilot/escort vehicle carry passengers?** A pilot/escort vehicle may not contain passengers, human or animal, except that:

(a) A certified individual in training status or necessary flag person may be in the vehicle with the approval of the pilot/escort operator.

(b) A service animal may travel in the pilot/escort vehicle but must be located somewhere other than front seat of vehicle.

**(12) Can the pilot/escort vehicle carry any other items, equipment, or load?** Yes, as long as the items, equipment or load have been properly secured; provided that, no equipment or load may be carried in or on the pilot/escort vehicle that:

(a) Exceeds the height, length, or width of the pilot/escort vehicle, or overhangs the vehicle, or otherwise impairs its immediate recognition as a pilot/escort vehicle by the traveling public;

(b) Obstructs the view of the flashing or rotating amber lights, or "OVERSIZE LOAD" sign on the vehicle;

(c) Causes safety risks; or

(d) Otherwise impairs the performance by the operator or the pilot/escort vehicle of the duties required by these rules.

**(13) Can a pilot/escort vehicle escort more than one extra-legal load at the same time?** No, unless the department determines there are special circumstances that have resulted in an express authorization on the special permit.

**(14) When and how must a pilot/escort vehicle use a height-measuring device?** The height-measuring device (pole) must be used when escorting an extra-legal load in excess of 14 feet six inches high, unless an alternative authorization has been granted by the department and stated on the special permit. The height pole must extend between three and six inches above the maximum height of the extra-legal vehicle, or load, to compensate for the affect of wind and motion. The height measuring device (pole) shall be mounted on the front of the lead pilot/escort vehicle. When not in the act of escorting an extra-legal height move, or prerunning a route to determine height acceptance, the height pole shall be removed, tied down or otherwise reduced to legal height.

**(15) Do the rules change when a uniformed off-duty law enforcement officer, using official police car or motorcycle, performs the escorting function?** While the spirit of the rules remains the same, specific rules may be modified to fit the situation.

**(16) Are certified pilot/escort vehicle operators required to have commercial auto insurance?** Yes, for hire certified pilot/escort vehicle operators are required to have insurance to conduct the duties associated to this rule:

(a) One hundred thousand dollars for bodily injury to or death of one person in any one accident;

(b) Three hundred thousand dollars for bodily injury to or death of two or more persons in any one accident; and

(c) Fifty thousand dollars for damage to or destruction of property of others in any one accident.

Satisfactory evidence of the insurance shall be carried at all times by the operator of the pilot vehicle, which evidence shall be displayed upon request by a law enforcement officer.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 46.44.090 and 46.44.093. WSR 23-06-027, § 468-38-100, filed 2/22/23, effective 3/25/23; WSR 20-21-042, § 468-38-100, filed 10/13/20, effective 11/13/20; WSR 18-13-029, § 468-38-100, filed 6/11/18, effective 7/12/18; WSR 17-11-001, § 468-38-100, filed 5/3/17, effective 6/3/17; WSR 16-11-012, § 468-38-100, filed 5/5/16, effective 6/5/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.44.090. WSR 06-07-025, § 468-38-100, filed 3/7/06, effective 4/7/06; WSR 05-04-053, § 468-38-100, filed 1/28/05, effective 2/28/05; WSR 89-23-110 (Order 68), § 468-38-100, filed 11/22/89, effective 12/23/89; WSR 82-18-010 (Order 31, Resolution No. 156), § 468-38-100, filed 8/20/82. Formerly WAC 468-38-180. Statutory Authority: 1977 ex.s. c 151. WSR 79-01-033 (DOT Order 10 and Comm. Order 1, Resolution No. 13), § 468-38-100, filed 12/20/78. Formerly WAC 252-24-100.]