



WELL DRILLING RIGS – HOW TO PROPERLY REGISTER

Maine Motor Transport Association

Recently an issue developed in Maine regarding an MMTA member who was stopped by the Maine State Police, Troop K, and inspected at roadside. Several questions regarding the weight of the vehicle and how it was registered prompted many calls from this member and other well drillers who were inquiring how to properly register a well drilling rig and what the legal weight can be. This article is intended to outline the regulations involved and explain the process for properly registering a well drilling rig in Maine.



Most well drilling rigs are over the legal road limit for both gross and axle weights, based on their configurations. This is due to the tools and equipment that they are set up for in order to perform the job they are designed to do. As such, the vehicles cannot be registered in the same manner as trucks or truck tractors and must be registered as **Special Mobile Equipment, Class A**.

Drilling rigs should register as **Special Mobile Equipment, Class A** at their municipal office. You must register for the total gross weight of the vehicle with all of the tools necessary to operate the vehicle. By law, special mobile equipment cannot transport other property or passengers not related to the rig's primary function. The vehicle is also subject to excise tax in the same manner as other vehicles and this is paid during registration at the municipal office. The town office will give you a TRACTOR plate for the vehicle. These vehicles are not subject to Heavy Vehicle Use Tax (HVUT).

Once the vehicle is properly registered, an annual over limit permit is required to be obtained from Maine BMV in accordance Title 29A §2382 and with MDOT rule chapter 157. Vehicles that are within 15% of legal road weights for trucks are eligible to obtain an annual overweight permit. Vehicles that exceed 15% would be required to obtain individual permits each time they travel. Cost for this permit is currently \$303.

As you have read, the rules and regulations can be complicated! As always, members may call Maine Motor Transport Association for assistance and guidance with the regulations at 623-4128. The supporting laws and regulations are provided below for those interested:

GUIDE TO COMMERCIAL MOTR VEHICLE REGULATIONS:

[https://www.maine.gov/sos/bmv/commercial/Commercial%20Vehicle%20Laws%20&%20Regulations%20\(June%206,%202012\).pdf](https://www.maine.gov/sos/bmv/commercial/Commercial%20Vehicle%20Laws%20&%20Regulations%20(June%206,%202012).pdf)

LEGAL GROSS AND AXLE LIMITS - Title 29A §2353:

§2353. Weight limits

1. Weight limits. Except as provided in [section 2355](#), the following gross vehicle weight limits apply to vehicles operating on a public way:

A. For a 2-axle vehicle, 34,000 pounds;

B. For a 3-axle vehicle or combination of vehicles, 54,000 pounds;

C. For a 4-axle vehicle or combination of vehicles and, except as provided by [section 2364](#), for single unit vehicles of 5 or more axles, 69,000 pounds;

D. Except as provided in paragraph E, section 2354, section 2357, subsection 4 and [section 2365](#) for combination vehicles with 5 or more axles, 80,000 pounds; and

E. For a combination of 3-axle truck tractor and tri-axle semitrailer, 100,000 pounds.

2. Weight reductions. The maximum gross vehicle weight permitted for combination vehicles having:

A. Four axles is reduced by 1,000 pounds for each foot the distance is less than 18 feet between the centers of the extreme axles, excluding the steering axle, measured to the nearest foot; or

B. Five or more axles is reduced by 2,000 pounds for each foot the distance is less than 24 feet between the centers of the extreme axles, excluding the steering axle, measured to the nearest foot.

3. Exception. [Subsection 2](#) does not apply to vehicles operated on the Interstate Highway System.

4. Axle weight limits. The following axle weight limits apply.

A. Except as provided in [section 2355](#), a vehicle may not be operated with a gross weight exceeding:

(1) On a single-axle unit, 22,400 pounds;

(2) On a tandem-axle unit, 38,000 pounds; or

(3) On a tri-axle unit, 48,000 pounds.

B. A single axle of a tandem-axle unit may not support more than 60% of the total weight supported by that tandem-axle unit, unless neither axle exceeds the weight legally allowed on a single-axle unit of that vehicle.

C. A single axle of a tri-axle unit may not support more than 40% of the total weight supported by that tri-axle unit.

D. The maximum gross weight of a vehicle or axle may not be increased by the addition of an axle unless it supports at least 50% of the added weight permitted by its addition.

5. Maximum tire weight. A vehicle may not be operated when the load on the road surface is greater than 600 pounds per inch of tire width, manufacturer's rating, except for:

A. Farm trucks transporting potatoes directly from the fields to the place of storage or to a processing facility during the potato harvesting season; or

B. A vehicle operating under an overweight permit issued pursuant to [section 2381](#).

A tractor, the propulsive power of which is exerted not through wheels resting on the ground but by means of a flexible band or chain known as a movable track, is not subject to this subsection if the portions of track in contact with the surface of the way present plane surfaces.

6. Exemption. A vehicle modified for the purpose of plowing snow is exempt from the weight limits imposed by this chapter when engaged in or enroute to or returning from plowing snow or in ice control. A vehicle modified for the purpose of plowing snow is exempt from the maximum tire weight provisions of [subsection 5](#) at all times. Any fire-fighting vehicle with its proper equipment that meets the National Fire Protection Association standards is exempt from the gross and axle weight limits imposed by this chapter. Any vehicle engaged in emergency maintenance of a public way is exempt from the weight limits imposed by this chapter.

7. Exemption; farm vehicles transporting potatoes. A farm vehicle transporting potatoes from the field to a storage or processing facility during the potato harvesting season is exempt from the axle weight limits and axle weight tolerance restrictions imposed by this chapter, except for the weight limits imposed under section 2355. To be eligible for this exemption, the farm vehicle must be in compliance with the gross weight limits established in this chapter and must have at least 8,000 pounds on the steering axle. This exemption does not apply on the Interstate Highway System, including that portion designated as the Maine Turnpike.

8. Vehicles within maximum gross vehicle weight limits. Notwithstanding any provision of this subchapter to the contrary, if a vehicle that exceeds axle weight limits and axle weight tolerance restrictions imposed by this subchapter by less than 5,000 pounds is within the applicable maximum gross vehicle weight limit including tolerances, the fine imposed under this subchapter is reduced by 50%.

This subsection does not apply to vehicles traveling on the Interstate Highway System except that portion of Interstate 95 designated as the Maine Turnpike.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL MOBILE EQUIPMENT, Title 29A §101(70)

70. Special mobile equipment. "Special mobile equipment" means a motor vehicle with permanently mounted equipment not designed or used primarily for the transportation of persons or property. "Special mobile equipment" includes, but is not limited to, road construction or maintenance machinery, ditch-digging apparatus, stone crushers, air compressors, power shovels, cranes, graders, rollers, trucks used only to plow snow and for other duties pertaining to winter maintenance, including sanding and salting, well drillers and wood-sawing equipment or similar types of equipment.

Special mobile equipment is divided into Class A and Class B special mobile equipment. Well drillers must be registered as Class A special mobile equipment. All other special mobile equipment may be registered either as Class A or Class B special mobile equipment.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL MOBILE EQUIPMENT, Title 29A §513

1. Definition. For the purpose of this section, "special mobile equipment" does not include a vehicle that may be used for the conveyance of property except:

A. Conveying hand tools or parts used in connection with the operation of that equipment; or

B. Road construction or maintenance machinery transporting earth on that portion of the highway under construction.

1-A. Registration required. Except as provided in [subsection 3](#), special mobile equipment used on public ways, including, but not limited to, equipment that is rented from a location in this State or outside

this State, regardless of whether the main office or headquarters of the owner of the equipment is located in this State or outside this State, must be registered in this State in accordance with this chapter.

2. Annual registration fee. The annual registration fee for special mobile equipment that is permanently mounted on a traction unit or motor chassis is as follows.

A. Class A special mobile equipment must be operated under an annual registration. The fee for a Class A special mobile equipment registration permit is as follows.

(1) For gross weight from 0 to 54,000 pounds, the fee is as in [section 505, subsection 2-A](#).

(2) For gross weight from 54,001 to 60,000 pounds, the fee is \$387.

(3) For gross weight from 60,001 to 65,000 pounds, the fee is \$417.

(4) For gross weight from 65,001 to 70,000 pounds, the fee is \$447.

(5) For gross weight from 70,001 to 75,000 pounds, the fee is \$477.

(6) For gross weight from 75,001 to 80,000 pounds, the fee is \$507.

(7) For gross weight from 80,001 to 90,000 pounds, the fee is \$567.

(8) For gross weight from 90,001 to 94,000 pounds, the fee is \$592.

(9) For gross weight from 94,001 to 100,000 pounds, the fee is \$712.

B. The fee for Class B special mobile equipment is \$20.

C. For Class B special mobile equipment, if the gross weight is in excess of 20,000 pounds, the registrant must obtain a permit as required by [section 2382, subsection 5](#).

D. Special mobile equipment may be operated unloaded between construction projects and to or from the place where the vehicle is customarily kept, if a permit is first obtained under [section 2382, subsection 5](#).

3. Exemption from registration. Special mobile equipment that is used exclusively on the closed portion of a public way for the limited purposes of constructing or repairing that public way and that is transported by another vehicle to and from the construction project is exempt from registration under this chapter. For purposes of this subsection, the special mobile equipment must be operated only within the boundaries of a closed way. Notwithstanding section 1601, the owner or operator of special mobile equipment that is exempt from registration pursuant to this subsection shall maintain the amounts of financial responsibility specified in section 1605.

§2382. Overlimit movement permits

1. Overlimit movement permits issued by State. The Secretary of State, acting under guidelines and advice of the Commissioner of Transportation, may grant permits to move nondivisible objects having a length, width, height or weight greater than specified in this Title over a way or bridge maintained by the Department of Transportation.

2. Permit fee. The Secretary of State, with the advice of the Commissioner of Transportation, may set the fee for single trip permits, at not less than \$6, nor more than \$30, based on weight, height, length and width. The Secretary of State may, by rule, implement fees that have been set by the Commissioner of Transportation for multiple trip, long-term overweight movement permits. Rules established pursuant to this section are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter II-A.

3. County and municipal permits. A county commissioner or municipal officer may grant a permit, for a reasonable fee, for travel over a way or bridge maintained by that county or municipality.

4. Permits for weight. A vehicle granted a permit for excess weight must first be registered for the maximum gross vehicle weight allowed for that vehicle.

5. Long-term permits. The Secretary of State may grant permits for up to one year for trucks, truck tractors, semitrailers, heavy duty recovery vehicles and Class A special mobile equipment. Notwithstanding [Title 5, section 8071, subsection 2, paragraph A](#), the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Commissioner of Transportation, shall establish the fee schedule by rule. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in [Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A](#).

6. Scope of permit. A permit is limited to the particular vehicle or object to be moved, the trailer or semitrailer hauling the overlimit object and particular ways and bridges.

7. Construction permits. A permit for a stated period of time may be issued for loads and equipment employed on public way construction projects, United States Government projects or construction of private ways, when within construction areas established by the Department of Transportation. The permit:

A. Must be procured from the municipal officers for a construction area within that municipality;

B. May require the contractor to be responsible for damage to ways used in the construction areas and may provide for:

(1) Withholding by the agency contracting the work of final payment under contract; or

(2) The furnishing of a bond by the contractor to guarantee suitable repair or payment of damages.

The suitability of repairs or the amount of damage is to be determined by the Department of Transportation on state-maintained ways and bridges, otherwise by the municipal officers;

C. May be granted by the Department of Transportation or by the state engineer in charge of the construction contract; and

D. For construction areas, carries no fee and does not come within the scope of this section.

8. Gross vehicle weight permits. The following may grant permits to operate a vehicle having a gross vehicle weight exceeding the prescribed limit:

A. The Secretary of State, with the consent of the Department of Transportation, for state and state aid highways and bridges within city or compact village limits;

B. Municipal officers, for all other ways and bridges within that city and compact village limits; and

C. The county commissioners, for county roads and bridges located in unorganized territory.

9. Pilot vehicles. The following restrictions apply to pilot vehicles.

A. Pilot vehicles required by a permit must be equipped with warning lights and signs as required by the Secretary of State with the advice of the Department of Transportation.

B. Warning lights may be operated and lettering on the signs may be visible on a pilot vehicle only while it is escorting a vehicle with a permit on a public way.

With the advice of the Commissioner of Transportation and the Chief of the State Police, the Secretary of State shall establish rules for the operation of pilot vehicles.

9-A. Police escort. A person may not operate a single vehicle or a combination of vehicles of 125 feet or more in length or 16 feet or more in width on a public way unless the vehicle or combination of vehicles is

accompanied by a police escort. The Secretary of State, with the advice of the Commissioner of Transportation, may require a police escort for vehicles of lesser dimensions.

A. The Bureau of State Police shall establish a fee for state police escorts to defray the costs of providing a police escort. A county sheriff or municipal police department may establish a fee to defray the costs of providing police escorts.

B. The Bureau of State Police shall provide a police escort if a request is made by a permittee. A county sheriff or municipal police department may refuse a permittee's request for a police escort.

C. A vehicle or combination of vehicles for which a police escort is required must be accompanied by a state police escort when operating on the interstate highway system.

10. Taxes paid. A permit for a mobile home may not be granted unless the applicant provides reasonable assurance that all property taxes, sewage disposal charges and drain and sewer assessments applicable to the mobile home, including those for the current tax year, have been paid or that the mobile home is exempt from those taxes. A municipality may waive the requirement that those taxes be paid before the issuance of a permit if the mobile home is to be moved from one location in the municipality to another location in the same municipality for purposes not related to the sale of the mobile home.

11. Violation. A person who moves an object over the public way in violation of this section commits a traffic infraction.

MDOT RULE CHAPTER 157 LINK:

[250c157.docx \(live.com\)](#)