

The Vermont Statutes

Trailer Summary:

Dimensions: Dimensions shall not exceed: a total length of 75 feet, a width of 102 inches and a total height of height 13 feet 6 inches.

Brakes: Every trailer, semi-trailer, or trailer coach of a gross weight of more than 3,000 pounds but less than 6,000 pounds shall be equipped with brakes on the wheels of at least one axle, adequate to control the movement of and to stop and to hold the vehicle and so designed as to be applied by the driver of the towing motor vehicle from its cab.

Every trailer, semi-trailer, or trailer coach of a gross weight of 6,000 pounds, or more, shall be equipped with brakes on all wheels adequate to control the movement of and to stop and to hold the vehicle designed as to be applied by the driver of the towing motor vehicle from its cab. The brakes shall be designed and connected that in case of an accidental break-away of the towed vehicle, the brakes thereon shall be automatically applied and remain applied for not less than 15 minutes.

Lighting/Reflectors: Taillights, required; brake lights, at least 1 required, if equipped with 2 both must work; license plate light, required; turn signals, required if trailer coach manufactured after January 1, 1955; reflectors required.

Hitch/Signals: In addition to a hitch, trailer coaches shall be secured to the towing vehicle, while in operation on any highway, by a safety chain. The hitch on any motor vehicle towing a trailer coach and the corresponding coupling on such coach and such safety chain shall be adequate to ensure the public safety.

Mirrors: All motor trucks and motor vehicles towing a trailer or semi-trailer shall be equipped with a mirror the driver shall at all times have a reflected view of other vehicles approaching from the rear.

Speed Limits: As posted.

Towing: No person may occupy a trailer coach while it is being moved upon a public highway.

Other: There shall be carried on each trailer coach at least one fire extinguisher of a type approved by the State fire marshal, in good usable condition and easily accessible.

Title 23: Motor Vehicles

§ 4. Definitions

Except as may be otherwise provided herein, and unless the context otherwise requires in statutes relating to motor vehicles and enforcement of the law regulating vehicles, as provided in this title and 20 V.S.A. part 5, the following definitions shall apply:

(20) "Motor truck" means any motor vehicle designed primarily for the transportation of property and shall be construed to include truck tractor-semitrailer and truck tractor-semitrailer-trailer combinations.

(40) "Trailer" is a vehicle without motive power designed to be drawn by a motor vehicle, and so constructed that no part of its weight rests upon the towing vehicle excepting, however, road making appliances and transportation dollies, and "semi-trailer" is a vehicle without motive power, designed to be drawn by a motor vehicle, and so constructed that some part of its weight and that of its load rests upon or is carried by the towing vehicle, excepting, however, pole dinkeys, transportation dollies, and road making appliances.

§ 1431. Height and width limits

(a) Except for the provisions of subsection (c) of this section, motor vehicles and loads shall not exceed eight and one-half feet in width or 13 feet six inches in height. The term width shall mean the total width of the vehicle and load, excluding safety devices as determined by the Commissioner which may extend up to three inches on each side of the vehicle. The height and width limits of this section shall not apply to snow plows, road machines, oilers, traction engines, tractors, rollers, power shovels, dump wagons, trucks, highway building equipment, and road-making appliances employed on highway maintenance or on highway construction when operated within a construction area, or to vehicles employed by municipalities for transportation and disposal of nontoxic residual waste sludge from waste water and water treatment facilities while utilized for those purposes, nor shall the limits apply to traction engines, tractor, trailer, or motor trucks operated on a public highway, under a permit from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, as provided in section 1400 of this title. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the use of the stop arm described in section 1281a of this title and no permit shall be required.

§ 1432. Length of vehicles; authorized highways

(a) Operation of vehicles with or without a trailer or semitrailer. No motor vehicle without a trailer or semitrailer attached, which is longer than 46 feet overall, shall be operated upon any highway except under special permission from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. A motor vehicle with a trailer or semitrailer shall be operated, with regard to the length of the vehicle, pursuant to this section. If there is a trailer or semitrailer, the distance between the kingpin of the semitrailer to the center of the rearmost axle group shall not exceed 41 feet. An "axle group" is defined as two or more axles where the centers of all the axles are spaced at an equal distance apart.

(1) Vehicles with a trailer or semitrailer not exceeding 75 feet. If the overall length of a vehicle with a trailer or semitrailer does not exceed 75 feet, it may be operated without a permit.

(2) A receiver or shipper of goods located in Vermont may request from the Agency of Transportation access to a State highway for a commercial motor vehicle where the overall length exceeds 75 feet. If the total vehicle length is in excess of 75 feet or the distance from the steering axle to the rearmost tractor axle is longer than 25 feet, a permit may be requested from the Commissioner. In that event, the Agency of Transportation shall review the route or routes requested, making its determination for approval based on safety and engineering considerations, after considering input from local government and regional planning commissions or the metropolitan planning organization. The Agency shall maintain consistency in its application of acceptable highway geometry when approving other routes. The Agency may authorize safety precautions on these highways, if warranted, which shall include precautionary signage, intelligent transportation system signage, special speed limits, and use of flashing lights.

(3) Vehicles with a trailer or semitrailer longer than 75 feet. If the overall length of a vehicle with a trailer or semitrailer is longer than 75 feet, a permit may be issued pursuant to subdivision 1402(b)(1) of this title.

(b) Rear-end protective devices on trailers. A trailer or semitrailer not in excess of 53 feet may be operated provided the semitrailer is equipped with a rear-end protective device of substantial construction consisting of a continuous lateral beam extending to within four inches of the lateral extremities of the semitrailer and located not more than 22 inches from the surface as measured with the vehicle empty and on a level surface.

<Text of subsec. (c) is repealed effective July 1, 2022, pursuant to [2021, No. 55](#), § 10.>

(c) Operation on U.S. Route 4. Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, vehicles with a trailer or semitrailer that are longer than 68 feet but not longer than 75 feet may be operated with a single or multiple trip overlength permit issued at no cost by the Department of Motor Vehicles or, for a fee, by an entity authorized in subsection 1400(d) of this title on U.S. Route 4 from the New Hampshire state line to the junction of VT Route 100 south, provided the distance from the kingpin of the semitrailer to the center of the rearmost axle group is not greater than 41 feet.

(d) Operation of pole semitrailers. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to prevent the operation of so-called pole dinkeys or pole semitrailers when being used to support the ends of poles, timbers, pipes, or structural members capable, generally, of sustaining themselves as beams between the supporting connections, the overall length of which may exceed 75 feet under special permission from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.

(e) Operation on Interstate highways. Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, on the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways and those classes of qualifying Federal-aid Primary System highways as designated by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and on highways leading to or from the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways for a distance of one mile, unless the Agency of Transportation finds the use of a specific highway to be unsafe, no overall length limits for tractor-semitrailer or tractor semitrailer-trailer combination shall apply. On these highways, no semitrailer in a tractor-semitrailer combination longer than 53 feet and no trailer or semitrailer in a tractor-semitrailer-trailer combination longer than 28 feet shall be operated.

However, the limits established by this section shall not be construed in such a manner as to prohibit the use of semitrailers in a tractor-semitrailer combination of such dimensions as were in actual and lawful use in this State on December 1, 1982.

(f) Repealed by 2017, No. 71§ 16, eff. June 8, 2017.

§ 1402. Overweight, width, height, and length permits; fees

(a) Overweight, overwidth, indivisible overlength, and overheight permits. Overweight, overwidth, indivisible overlength, and overheight permits shall be signed by the Commissioner or by his or her agent and a copy shall be kept in the office of the Commissioner or in a location approved by the Commissioner. Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, a copy shall also be available in the towing vehicle and must be available for inspection on demand of a law enforcement officer. Before operating a traction engine, tractor, trailer, motor truck, or other motor vehicle, the person to whom a permit to operate in excess of the weight, width, indivisible overlength, and height limits established by this title is granted shall pay a fee of \$40.00 for each single trip permit or \$112.00 for a blanket permit, except that the fee for a fleet blanket permit shall be \$112.00 for the first unit and \$6.00 for each unit thereafter. At the option of a carrier, an annual permit for the entire fleet, to operate over any approved route, may be obtained for \$112.00 for the first tractor and \$6.00 for each additional tractor, up to a maximum fee of \$1,000.00. The fee for a fleet permit shall be based on the entire number of tractors owned by the applicant. An applicant for a fleet permit may apply for any number of specific routes, each of which shall be reviewed with regard to the characteristics of the route and the type of equipment operated by the applicant. When the weight or size of the vehicle-load are considered sufficiently excessive for the routing requested, the Agency of Transportation shall, on request of the Commissioner, conduct an engineering inspection of the vehicle-load and route, for which a fee of \$300.00 will be added to the cost of the permit if the load is a manufactured home. For all other loads of any size or with gross weight limits less than 150,000 pounds, the fee shall be \$800.00 for any engineering inspection that requires up to eight hours to conduct. If the inspection requires more than eight hours to conduct, the fee shall be \$800.00 plus \$60.00 per hour for each additional hour required. If the vehicle and load weigh 150,000 pounds or more but not more than 200,000 pounds, the engineering inspection fee shall be \$2,000.00. If the vehicle and load weigh more than 200,000 pounds but not more than 250,000 pounds, the engineering inspection fee shall be \$5,000.00. If the vehicle and load weigh more than 250,000 pounds, the engineering inspection fee shall be \$10,000.00. The study must be completed prior to the permit being issued. Prior to the issuance of a permit, an applicant whose vehicle weighs 150,000 pounds or more, or is 15 or more feet in width or height, shall file with the Commissioner a special certificate of insurance showing minimum coverage of \$250,000.00 for death or injury to one person, \$500,000.00 for death or injury to two or more persons, and \$250,000.00 for property damage, all arising out of any one crash.

(b) Overlength permits. Except as provided in subsections 1432(c) and (e) of this title, it shall be necessary to obtain an overlength permit as follows:

(1) For vehicles with a trailer or semitrailer longer than 75 feet, anywhere in the State on highways approved by the Agency of Transportation. In such cases, the vehicle may be operated with a single trip overlength permit issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles for a fee of \$28.00. If the vehicle is 100 feet or more in length, the permit applicant shall file with the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles a special certificate of insurance showing minimum coverage of \$250,000.00 for death or injury to one person, \$500,000.00 for death or injury to two or more persons, and \$250,000.00 for property damage, all arising out of any one crash.

(2) Repealed by 2017, No. 71, § 15, eff. June 8, 2017.

(c) Prepayment of permit fees. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles may accept prepayments of fees under section 1400 of this title. A prepayment shall be credited to the account of the person making the prepayment and the account shall be reduced to the extent of any fees due from that person under this section; provided, however, fees may not be charged to the account in excess of the account balance. Upon oral application of any person having prepaid fees, the Commissioner may issue a permit with an identifying number, and the permit shall become effective immediately. Upon application, the Commissioner shall return any unused portion of the prepayment to the person originally making the prepayment.

(d) Repealed by 2013, Adj. Sess., No. 189, § 19, eff. July 1, 2014.

(e) "Low-bed" trailer permit.

(1) The Commissioner may issue an annual permit to allow the transportation of a so-called "low-bed" trailer. A "low-bed" trailer is defined as a trailer manufactured for the primary purpose of carrying heavy equipment on a flat-surfaced deck, which deck is at a height equal to or lower than the top of the rear axle group.

(2) A blanket permit may be obtained for an annual fee of \$275.00 per unit, provided the total vehicle length does not exceed 75 feet, does not exceed a loaded width of 12'6", does not exceed a total weight of 108,000 lbs., and has a height not exceeding 14 feet.

(3) Warning signs and flags shall be required if the vehicle exceeds 75 feet in length or exceeds 8'6" in width.

(4) Repealed by 2009, Adj. Sess., No. 123, § 56, eff. May 26, 2010.

(f) Single trip permit; duration. A single trip permit issued under this section shall be valid for seven business days.

§ 1307. Brake equipment required

(a) Every motor vehicle, when operated upon a highway shall be equipped with brakes acting on all wheels adequate to control the movement of and to stop and hold such vehicle, including two separate means of applying the brakes to at least two wheels. If those two separate means of applying the brakes are connected in any way, they shall be so constructed that failure of any one

part of the operating mechanism shall not leave the motor vehicle without brakes on at least two wheels.

(b) Motorcycles and motor-driven cycles need only to be equipped with at least one brake which may be operated by hand or foot.

(c) Farm-type tractors and motorized highway building equipment required to be registered need not have brakes on the wheels of the front axle.

(d) Trucks and truck-tractors having three or more axles:

(1) manufactured before July 25, 1980 need not have brakes on the front wheels;

(2) manufactured between July 24, 1980 and October 27, 1986, if any brake components have been removed, must be retrofitted to replace any brake components so that the vehicle meets the requirements of subsection (a) of this section, within one year of May 16, 1990;

(3) manufactured with at least two steerable axles, shall have brakes on at least one steerable axle, except that any such vehicle manufactured after July 1, 1992, shall be equipped with brakes on all wheels.

(e) Trailers, semi-trailers, trailer coaches, or pole trailers of a gross weight not exceeding 3,000 pounds need not have brakes provided the total weight on, and including, the wheels of the trailer, semi-trailer, or pole trailer shall not exceed 40 percent of the gross weight of the towing vehicle when connected to the trailer, semi-trailer, or pole trailer.

(f) Every trailer, semi-trailer, or trailer coach of a gross weight of more than 3,000 pounds but less than 6,000 pounds when operated upon a highway shall be equipped with brakes on the wheels of at least one axle, adequate to control the movement of and to stop and to hold the vehicle and so designed as to be applied by the driver of the towing motor vehicle from its cab. The brakes shall be so designed and connected that in case of an accidental break-away of the towed vehicle, the brake thereon shall be automatically applied, and remain applied for not less than 15 minutes.

(g) Every trailer, semi-trailer, or trailer coach of a gross weight of 6,000 pounds, or more, when operated upon the highways of this State, shall be equipped with brakes on all wheels adequate to control the movement of and to stop and to hold the vehicle and so designed as to be applied by the driver of the towing motor vehicle from its cab. The brakes shall be so designed and connected that in case of an accidental break-away of the towed vehicle, the brakes thereon shall be automatically applied and remain applied for not less than 15 minutes.

(h) The provisions of this section shall not apply to a farm trailer with a load which exceeds 3,000 pounds, nor to a motor vehicle manufactured or assembled prior to January 1, 1931, if the vehicle has brakes on at least two wheels, nor to a trailer coach with two or three axles with a gross weight in excess of 6,000 pounds manufactured prior to January 1, 1977, provided there are brakes on the wheels on one axle of a two-axle trailer coach and brakes on the wheels of two axles of a three-axle trailer coach.

§ 1341. Trailer coaches--Safety chain

In addition to a hitch, trailer coaches shall be secured to the towing vehicle, while in operation on any highway, by a safety chain. The hitch on any motor vehicle towing a trailer coach and the corresponding coupling on such coach and such safety chain shall be adequate to ensure the public safety.

§ 1248. Taillights

(a) Every motor vehicle, trailer, semi-trailer, and pole trailer, and any other vehicle which is being drawn at the end of a combination of vehicles, shall be equipped with at least two taillamps mounted on the rear, except that one taillamp shall be allowed on any vehicle equipped with only one when it was manufactured.

(b) Either a taillamp or a separate lamp shall be so constructed and placed as to illuminate with a white light all parts of the rear registration number plate on the vehicle so that all the numerals, letters, and marks on the plate are clearly visible and legible for at least 50 feet from the rear of the vehicle.

§ 1305. Mirror required

All motor trucks and motor vehicles towing a trailer or semi-trailer shall be equipped with a mirror not less than five inches in diameter or with less than 25 square inches of reflective area so attached that the driver shall at all times have a reflected view of other vehicles approaching from the rear. The mirror shall be attached in a manner that complies with the width requirements of section 1431 of this title. The extended rear-view mirror shall be retracted or removed when not towing a trailer or semi-trailer.

§ 1342. Fire extinguisher

There shall be carried on each trailer coach at least one fire extinguisher of a type approved by the State fire marshal, in good usable condition and easily accessible. The extinguisher shall be of not less than five pounds capacity, if it is of a CO₂ type, and not less than two and one-half pounds capacity, if it is of a dry chemical type

§ 1344. Riding in trailer coaches

No person may occupy a trailer coach while it is being moved upon a public highway. (Added 1969, No. 31, § 2.)