

Escort drivers' handbook

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INTRODUCTION

You're not just along for the ride

As the driver of an escort vehicle, you are part of a team doing the important job of safely moving overdimensional loads on Alberta's highways.

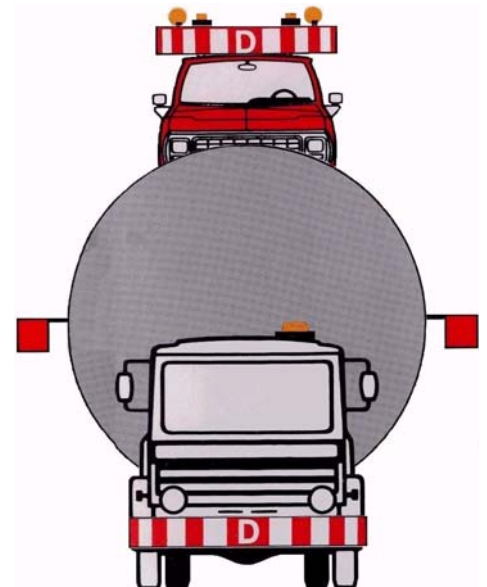
Pilot vehicle operators have the authority to direct traffic under Sec. 60 of the Traffic Safety Act, Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulation.

You carry much of the responsibility for protecting the public, a valuable load, the load driver and yourself.

Your duties go beyond just carrying an overdimensional sign. At every phase of the movement of an overdimensional load, you will have specific tasks to perform. The success of the trip will depend a lot on your skill, alertness and good judgment.

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General rules for the movement of oversized loads

Before a load, which exceeds legal size and weight limits, can be transported, the load driver must obtain a special permit from Alberta Transportation. The permit specifies general and specific conditions under which the movement must be made.

Permits are not issued to the drivers of escort vehicles but every escort driver must comply with the permit conditions which cover escort operations.

1. Escort vehicles must maintain an adequate distance in front of or behind the unit carrying the load in order to warn approaching vehicles of the oversized load.
2. All escort vehicle drivers and the oversized load driver must be in constant communication by two-way radio.
3. Oversized load movements may not travel in convoy unless special permission has been given to the operators involved in the move by Alberta Transportation.
4. The driver of the towing vehicle should take every opportunity to allow following traffic to pass. If traffic buildup behind the unit becomes heavy, the entire combined unit should move off the traveled portion of the roadway to allow traffic to pass safely.
5. You must have permission from the various road authorities concerned before removing or adjusting bridge railing, or modifying or tampering with traffic control devices or roadway structures.
6. Travel on all highways must be within the right-hand lane with the overhang extending over the shoulder except where there are roadside obstacles. Passing slower vehicles is allowed where this can be done safely.
7. It is a good idea to turn on all vehicle headlights and other non-flashing exterior lights, including those of the escort vehicle.
8. Dimensional signs identifying the oversized load shall be properly displayed on the transport vehicle and on each escort vehicle.

Your duties and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the escort vehicle driver to make the traveling public aware of the presence of an oversized load and to direct and control traffic when necessary.

Escort drivers also help the load driver move the load as safely as possible with the least possible delay and inconvenience to the traveling public.

Depending on the size of the load and the type of highway, either pilot (front) or trail (rear) vehicles, **or both**, will be required.

For more specific information, please refer to the rules and regulations list in the Appendix of this document.

Front escort

As the driver of the escort vehicle ahead of the oversized load, you will:

1. Warn oncoming traffic an oversized load is following, by traveling 300 to 1000 metres ahead of the load and displaying an approved dimensional sign and flashing lights.
2. Use a two-way radio to warn the load driver of any potential problems ahead, including hazards, obstructions or pedestrians on the road ahead.
3. Make sure the vehicles are following the route specified on the permit.

4. Find safe places for the vehicles to pull over in order to allow following traffic to pass safely.
5. Warn motorists, using proper flagging procedures, to stop at the entrance to narrow structures and other roadway restrictions to allow safe passage of the load.

Rear escort

As the driver of the escort vehicle following the overdimensional load, you will:

1. Warn traffic approaching from the rear that an overdimensional load is ahead by traveling 100 to 300 metres behind the load and by displaying an approved dimensional sign and flashing lights.
2. Use a two-way radio to warn the load driver of flat tires, objects coming loose from the load, defective lights and other potential hazards the driver may not be aware of.
3. Notify the load driver of motorists attempting to pass the load.
4. Warn motorists, using proper flagging procedures, to stop at the entrance to narrow structures and other roadway restrictions to allow safe passage of the load.

Be alert to potential danger

Your alertness can help avoid accidents and may even save lives.

For example: it is easy not to notice pedestrians dressed in dark clothing, or vehicles stopped without lights, on the road ahead, especially during the difficult lighting conditions of dusk or dawn. But with an overdimensional load extending onto the shoulder, your failure to notify the load driver in time could mean a tragedy.

If there is any chance that an obstacle ahead **could** cause problems, notify the load driver immediately. That's your job.

Equipment for escort vehicles

The escort vehicle must be in safe operating condition and be capable of displaying signs and other warning devices specified on the permit.

Each escort vehicle (or each towing vehicle if escort vehicles are not required) must be equipped with:

1. Three advanced warning triangles
2. Three warning flags for traffic marking
3. One warning flag per crew member for flagging
4. One reflective vest per crew member
5. One flashlight equipped with signal tube per crew member
6. An approved dimensional sign (see Schedules 3 and 4 in the Appendix) positioned so that it is readily visible to motorists approaching the overdimensional load
7. A two-way radio which meets Communications Canada standards

It is also recommended that safety equipment such as a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, hard hat, etc., be carried for emergencies.

Before the trip begins

It is important for all members of the team responsible for moving an overdimensional load to get together to check their equipment and to make sure that everyone understands the permit, the route and his or her own responsibilities.

1. Check the permit for any special requirements or instructions.
2. Make sure everyone understands the route and directions to be taken.
3. Check all equipment for the escort vehicle(s). The sign should be securely mounted, mirrors adjusted, lights turned on and all safety equipment accounted for.
4. Check your radios and select an appropriate two-way channel.

During the trip

The safety of the traveling public is of great importance. Of course, escort drivers must obey all traffic laws and regulations. Don't be tempted to assume that other drivers will yield the right of way to the load and escort vehicles because of the size of the load.

Traffic signals

When traveling a route controlled by traffic lights, care should be taken that stopping for signals does not cause the escorts and load to be widely separated.

If the escort passes through the intersection but the load is required to stop, the escort driver should pull over as soon as possible on the right-hand side of the road and resume travel as the load approaches at the required distance.

When the rear escort is stopped by a red light which has been cleared by the load, the load driver should proceed, and the rear escort driver should catch up to the load as soon as possible.

The escort driver(s) must be alert and avoid sudden stops at traffic signals.

Letting traffic pass

When there are more than three vehicles following the unit, or when following traffic is held up for more than a few minutes, the escort driver(s) should help the load driver find a suitable place for the vehicles to pull off the traveled portion of the roadway, allowing the traffic to pass safely.

Breakdowns and inclement weather

When inclement weather causes poor visibility and driving conditions, or there are such problems as mechanical breakdowns, a safe place should be found to remove the load from the roadway.

When sight distances are limited

On winding or narrow roads or where obstacles are located near the road, approaching motorists may not be able to see the load clearly until there are very close to it.

In these cases, the escort driver should travel to a point where the escort vehicle can be seen clearly from some distance away, halt and use the stop/slow paddle or flag to warn other drivers they are about to encounter an overdimensional load.

Stopping traffic

When an overdimensional load must use a roadway which is too narrow for two-way traffic, the driver of the escort vehicle must advance to a point where two-way traffic is possible, and stop traffic there using proper flagging procedures.

When the load driver reaches that point, he or she should stop and allow traffic to clear from both directions.

It is important for your own safety, and that of the traveling public, that you understand proper flagging procedures.

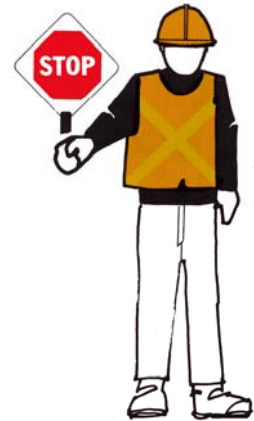
Flagging

The flagperson is responsible for safeguarding the public and the overdimensional load by warning motorists of danger ahead and guiding them safely through the area. Also when necessary a flagperson can warn traffic to stop and advise motorists of delays and keep vehicles in the proper lanes.

You must be alert at all times and always stand while waiting for traffic. You should wear a hard hat, reflective vest, and have a flag or stop/slow paddle.

Procedures

1. Stand far enough ahead of the problem area to give approaching traffic enough distance to reduce speed and come to a stop.
2. Stand facing traffic, where you can see and be seen. Do not stand in the centre of the traffic lane, or in any position where you are liable to be hit by approaching traffic.
3. Your signals must be clear and distinct. Don't make drivers guess what they should do.
4. To warn traffic to stop, hold your flag or paddle in a horizontal position across the path of the vehicle. After the first vehicle has been stopped, move to the centre line so drivers approaching from the rear can readily see you.
5. If time permits, inform drivers of the reason for the delay. Be courteous and brief.
6. To slow traffic, but not to stop it, extend your flag or paddle into the traffic lane, and lower it before the traffic is completely stopped. At the same time, use an up and down waving motion with the left hand, palm down, to emphasize the need for drivers to slow down.
7. Never wave a flag or paddle or use it to signal traffic to move ahead.



If a collision occurs

Avoid a second collision by pulling completely off the road. Turn on your hazard warning lights and use flares or reflectors to warn approaching traffic of the problem.

If moving off of the roadway is impossible, use flagging to stop or divert traffic.

Get help. Contact the police and an ambulance if anyone has been injured. Do not move an injured person unless he or she is in a burning vehicle or in any other immediate danger.

To reduce fire hazards, turn off the ignition of wrecked vehicle.

When the trip is completed

When the escort operation is over, you must remove or cover the overdimensional load sign as per the Commercial Vehicle Dimension & Weight Regulation.

Appendix

Relevant sections from

The Commercial Vehicle Dimension and Weight Regulation

Pursuant to the Traffic Safety Act

Definitions

- 1 (cc) "warning flag" means a flag of red or orange color at least 400 millimetres square;
- 1 (dd) "warning light" mean a light showing amber to the front and red to the rear visible at a distance of 150 metres in normal darkness.

Overdimensional vehicle

- 14. In this Part, "overdimensional vehicle" means a public vehicle referred to in section 15 that is operated under the authority of a special permit.

Overdimensional safety requirements

- 15
 - (1) Notwithstanding that a public vehicle or its load does not comply with Section 4, a person may operate that vehicle on a highway where permitted to do so under the authority of a special permit.
 - (2) A person who operates a public vehicle on a highway under the authority of a special permit shall ensure that the vehicle and related equipment used in the operation of that vehicle comply with this Part and that the operation is carried out in accordance with this Part.
 - (3) When a public vehicle is being operated under the authority of a special permit and the widest part of the vehicle or its load is more than
 - (a) 2.6 metres in width, the vehicle must be equipped with
 - (i) warning flags, if operated during daylight, and
 - (ii) warning lights, if operated during darkness or during adverse weather conditions, that are displayed on each side at the widest part of the vehicle or load;

- (b) 3.05 metres in width, the vehicle must, in addition to being equipped as required under clause 2(a), be equipped with dimensional signs that comply with Schedule 2 or 3,
 - (i) one sign being
 - (A) displayed at the front of the vehicle, or
 - (B) mounted on the cab of the vehicle in such a manner that the sign is clearly visible to traffic approaching on a 2-lane highway, and
 - (ii) one sign being displayed at the extreme rear of the vehicle or its load, whichever is further to the rear, in such a manner that the sign is clearly visible to traffic approaching from the rear;
 - (c) 3.35 metres in width, the vehicle must, in addition to being equipped as required under clauses (a) and (b), be equipped with one or more flashing lights;
 - (d) 3.85 metres in width, the vehicle
 - (i) must, in addition to being equipped as required under clauses (a) to (c),
 - (A) when on a 2-lane highway,
 - (I) if it or its load is not more than 4.45 metres in width, be accompanied by a pilot vehicle, and
 - (II) if it or its load is more than 4.45 metres in width, be accompanied by a pilot vehicle and a trail vehicle, and
 - (B) when on a multi-lane highway,
 - (I) if it or its load is not more than 5.5 metres in width, be accompanied by a trail vehicle, and
 - (II) if it or its load is more than 5.5 metres in width, be accompanied by a pilot vehicle and a trail vehicle, unless the special permit provides otherwise, and
 - (ii) must not be operated on a highway
 - (A) from 3 p.m. until midnight on a Friday or a day preceding a statutory holiday, or
 - (B) on Sunday or a statutory holiday.
- (4) A dimensional sign referred to in Schedules 2 and 3 must be
- (a) kept in good repair,
 - (b) kept clean and legible at all times, and
 - (c) covered, folded or removed when not required to be displayed.

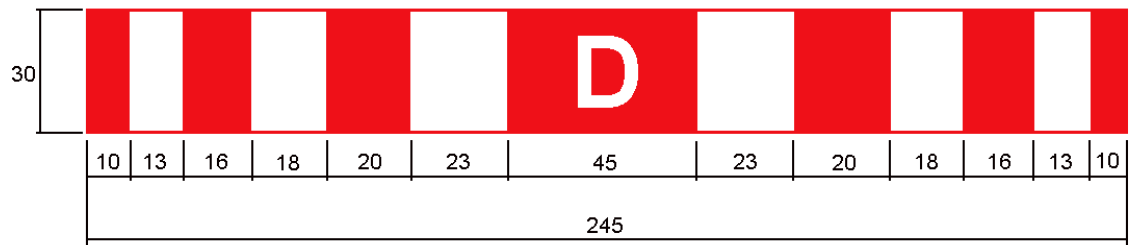
Escort vehicles

- 16 (1) When an overdimensional vehicle is required by special permit to be accompanied by an escort vehicle, 2-way radio communication must be maintained between each of the vehicles at all times.
- (2) A pilot vehicle accompanying an overdimensional vehicle must precede it at a distance of 300 to 1000 metres.
- (3) A trail vehicle accompanying an overdimensional vehicle must follow it at a distance of 100 to 300 metres.

- (4) An escort vehicle must be equipped with a dimensional sign
 - (a) that complies with a sign shown in Schedule 4 or 5, and
 - (b) that is mounted in such a manner as to be visible from both the front and rear of the vehicle.
- (5) When a dimensional sign shown in Schedule 4 is mounted on an escort vehicle,
 - (a) only the outboard lights must be used under normal weather and highway conditions, and
 - (b) the inboard lights must be used only
 - (i) under adverse weather or highway conditions,
 - (ii) when turning or flagging, or
 - (iii) during a mechanical breakdown.
- (6) When a dimensional sign shown in Schedule 5 is mounted on an escort vehicle, the flashing lights must be used at all times during which the vehicle is accompanying an overdimensional vehicle.
- (7) A vehicle, while engaged as an escort vehicle, must not
 - (a) tow any trailer or other vehicle, or
 - (b) carry any load that, in any manner, obscures any lights or signs that it is required to be equipped with.
- (8) An escort vehicle and, in the absence of an escort vehicle, the overdimensional vehicle must carry at least the following equipment:
 - (a) 3 approved warning devices;
 - (b) 3 warning flags for traffic marking;
 - (c) one warning flag per crew member for flagging;
 - (d) one reflective vest per crew member;
 - (e) one flashlight, equipped with signal tube, per crew member.
- (9) When a person who is located outside of the cab of a vehicle is engaged in an activity with respect to the operation or movement of an overdimensional vehicle, that person shall
 - (a) wear a reflective vest,and
 - (b) make use of warning flags or flashlights as may be necessary to warn or give directions to traffic on the highway.
- (10) The equipment referred to in subsection (8) must be maintained in a clean condition and in good repair.
- (11) A dimensional sign referred to in Schedules 4 and 5 must be
 - (a) kept in good repair,
 - (b) kept clean and legible at all times, and
 - (c) covered, folded or removed when not required to be displayed.

Schedule 2

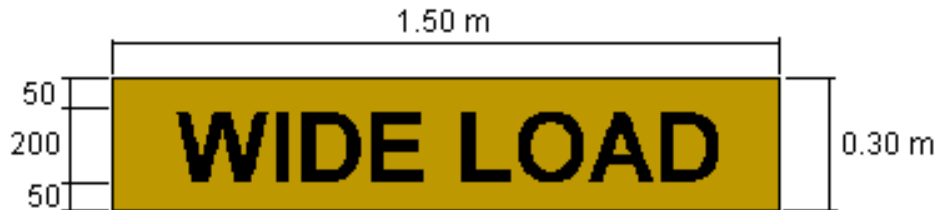
Sign For Overdimensional Loads



- 1 The sign or rigid area must be 2.45 metres X 0.3 metres.
- 2 The letter "D" must be white in color and must be 20 centimetres high, Series E.
- 3 The white portions of the sign or rigid area must be white in color with a good reflective quality.
- 4 The red portions of the sign or rigid area must be red in color and painted with the transparent red paint used for stop signs.

Schedule 3

Alternate Sign For Overdimensional Loads

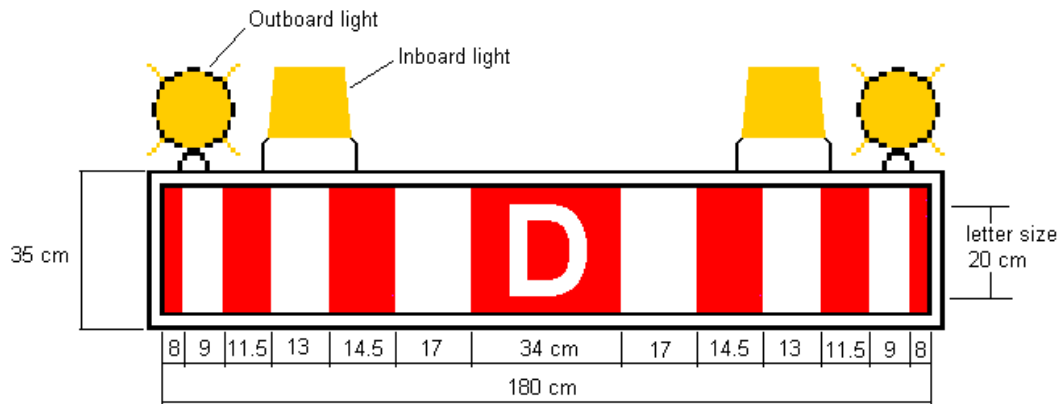


- 1 The panel size must be 1.5 metres X 0.3 metres.
- 2 The lettering must be black on a yellow background.
- 3 The lettering "Wide Load" must be 20 centimetres high, Series C.
- 4 The panel must have a 9.5 millimetre black border at the panel's edge.

Schedule 4

Sign For Pilot and Trail Vehicles

This sign is designed to be mounted on a vehicle top, carriers or an equivalent surface. It has 2 positions: upright when in use and folded flat on the carrier when not in use.



Specifications

- 1 BOX - must be 180 centimetres X 35 centimetres X 10 centimetres and constructed of mild steel material with inside and outside surfaces of baked white enamel. Eight lamps must be mounted in the box and spaced to give even lighting of the sign background. The box must shelter all wire connectors, switches, flashers, etc.
- 2 SIGN - must be 3 millimetres thick, with a white plexi-glass background with red bars painted with transparent red paint. The letter "D" must be white in color and must be 20 centimetres high, Series E.
- 3 OUTBOARD LIGHTS - must consist of two 175-millimetre (minimum) amber lights with reflectors, rated at 12.5 volts, 3 amps and 0.50 candela with a rated life of 300 hours.
- 4 INBOARD LIGHTS - must consist of 2 standard 203-millimetre rotating amber lights, with 2 seal beam units per lamp.

Schedule 5

Alternate Sign For Pilot and Trail Vehicles



This sign is designed to be mounted on a vehicle top, carriers or an equivalent surface. It has 2 positions: upright when in use and folded flat on the carrier when not in use.

Specifications

- 1 BOX - must be 180 centimetres X 35 centimetres X 10 centimetres and constructed of mild steel material with inside and outside surfaces of baked white enamel. Eight lamps must be mounted in the box and spaced to give even lighting of the sign background. The box must shelter all wire connectors, switches, flashers, etc.
- 2 SIGN - must be 3 millimetres thick, with a yellow plexi-glass background with 28-centimetre high black letters of 38-millimetre stroke.
- 3 LAMPS - must consist of two 175-millimetre (minimum) amber lights with reflectors capable of flashing simultaneously at 60 to 90 flashes per minute, rated at 12.5 volts, 3 amps and 0.50 candela with a rated life of 300 hours.

Relevant sections from

The Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulation

Part 2 Operation of Vehicles

Division 1 Directions to Drivers

Must obey traffic control device

57 A person driving a vehicle shall obey the instructions set out on or by any applicable traffic control device.

Must obey directions of peace officer

58 Notwithstanding anything in Part 1 or this Part, a person driving a vehicle shall obey the directions given by any peace officer directing traffic.

Malfunctioning traffic control device

59 If a traffic control signal is not operating or is not operating properly, a person driving a vehicle on a roadway that is in the vicinity of the traffic control signal shall use the roadway with caution.

Directions given by sign or flagperson

60 Notwithstanding anything in Part 1 or this Part,

- (a) when
 - (i) a person is giving directions, or
 - (ii) a barricade or sign is erected,

on a highway for the purposes of directing traffic in connection with an accident, an emergency or any construction, repair or other work on the highway or land adjacent to the highway, or

(b) when

(i) a person is giving directions, or

(ii) a sign is displayed,

for the purpose of directing traffic with respect to the operation of an over-dimensional vehicle on a highway or land adjacent to a highway,

a person driving a vehicle shall obey the directions given by the person giving those directions or, where no person is giving directions, the directions shown on the sign or barricade.