



OVERSIZE AND OVERWEIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

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State and federal regulations set standards for the size and weight of commercial vehicles operated on public highways. A commercial vehicle is any vehicle used for commerce or that has a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or more. For commercial vehicles that exceed the established size and weight standards, a state permitting process provides legal access via routes that are safe for nondivisible, oversize and overweight vehicles to travel along. Standards and policy concerning the size and weight of commercial vehicles and permitting are important for several reasons:

- trucking costs are influenced by the amount of product that can be transported in a single load;
- highway construction and maintenance costs are impacted by the size and weight of the vehicles utilizing the roadways; and
- oversize and overweight commercial vehicles may exceed the design clearances of highways, bridges, and other roadway structures, presenting a hazard to the transportation infrastructure and to other motorists.

This *issue brief* discusses the regulation, permitting, and routing of oversize and overweight commercial vehicles.

Federal Regulation

Federal limits on commercial vehicle weight and size were first enacted in 1956 through the Federal-Aid Highway Act. States are required to enforce federal minimum and maximum size and

weight standards where established, and to annually certify to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that they have an effective program in place for enforcing the standards.

Interstate and Defense Highway System.

The Interstate and Defense Highway System (IDHS, a national system of divided highways) covers approximately 40,000 miles. Federal weight standards apply to commercial vehicles operating on the IDHS. For vehicles operating off of the IDHS, states may set their own commercial vehicle weight standards.

National Network of Highways.

The National Network of Highways (NNH) is approximately 200,000 miles and includes the IDHS and other highways subject to federal size standards that are certified by the states to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as being capable of handling larger commercial vehicles. Federal size standards apply to commercial vehicles operating on all roadways within the NNH. Federal limits on the height of commercial vehicles have not been established, and states may impose their own standards. In addition, the federal government does not set a limit on the overall vehicle length of tractor-semitrailer operations on the NNH; however, federal law prohibits states from setting an overall length limit for these types of operations on the NNH.

Table 1 provides the federal size and weight standards, and the Colorado standards where there is no federal standard in place.