

349.16 Authority to impose special or seasonal weight limitations.

(1) The officer in charge of maintenance in case of highways maintained by a town, city or village, the county highway commissioner or county highway committee in the case of highways maintained by the county and the department in the case of highways maintained by the state may:

(a) Impose special weight limitations on any such highway or portion thereof which, because of weakness of the roadbed due to deterioration or climatic conditions or other special or temporary condition, would likely be seriously damaged or destroyed in the absence of such special limitations;

(b) Impose special weight limitations on bridges or culverts when in its judgment such bridge or culvert cannot safely sustain the maximum weights permitted by statute;

(c) Order the owner or operator of any vehicle being operated on a highway to suspend operation if in its judgment such vehicle is causing or likely to cause injury to such highway or is visibly injuring the permanence thereof or the public investment therein, except when s. 84.20 is applicable or when the vehicle is being operated pursuant to a contract which provides that the governmental unit will be reimbursed for any damage done to the highway. Traffic officers also may order suspension of operation under the circumstances and subject to the limitations stated in this paragraph.

(2) Imposition of the special weight limitations authorized by sub. (1) (a) shall be done by erecting signs on or along the highway on which it is desired to impose the limitation sufficient to give reasonable notice that a special weight limitation is in effect and the nature of that limitation. Imposition of the special weight limitations authorized by sub. (1) (b) shall be done by erecting signs before each end of the bridge or culvert to which the weight limitation applies sufficient to give reasonable notice that a special weight limitation is in effect and the nature of that limitation. All weight limitation signs and their erection shall comply with the rules of the department and shall be standard throughout the state.

(3)

(a) The authority in charge of the maintenance of the highway may exempt vehicles carrying certain commodities specified by the authority or which are used to perform certain services specified by the authority from the special weight limitations which are imposed under sub. (1) (a), or may set different weight limitations than those imposed under sub. (1) (a) for vehicles carrying those commodities or which are used to perform those services, if the exemption or limitation is reasonable and necessary to promote the public health, safety, and welfare.

(b) The authority in charge of the maintenance of the highway shall exempt from the special or seasonal weight limitations imposed under sub. (1) (a) a vehicle that is used to transport material pumped from a septic or holding tank if, because of health concerns, material needs to be removed from a septic or holding tank within 24 hours after the vehicle owner or operator is notified and if the vehicle is operated for the purpose of emptying the septic or holding tank and disposing of its contents and is operated on a route that minimizes travel on highways subject to weight limitations imposed under sub. (1) (a). Within 72 hours after operating a vehicle that transported material pumped from a septic or holding tank and that exceeded special or seasonal weight limitations as authorized by this paragraph, the owner or operator of the vehicle shall notify the authority in charge of maintenance of the highways over which the vehicle was operated.

(c) The authority in charge of the maintenance of the highway shall exempt from the special or seasonal weight limitations imposed under sub. (1) (a) a vehicle operated by or at the direction of a public

utility, as defined in s. 196.01 (5), a telecommunications provider, as defined in s. 196.01 (8p), or a cooperative association organized under ch. 185 for the purpose of producing or furnishing heat, light, power, or water to its members, that is being operated for the purpose of responding to a service interruption.

(d) The authority in charge of the maintenance of the highway shall exempt from the special or seasonal weight limitations imposed under sub. (1) (a) a motor vehicle that is being operated to deliver propane for heating purposes if the gross weight imposed on the highway by the vehicle does not exceed 30,000 pounds, for a vehicle with a single rear axle, or 40,000 pounds, for a vehicle with tandem rear axles, and, if the motor vehicle is a tank vehicle, the tank is loaded to no more than 50 percent of the capacity of the tank. A tank vehicle operated under this paragraph shall be equipped with a gauge on the tank that shows the amount of propane in the tank as a percent of the capacity of the tank and shall carry documentation of the capacity of the tank either on the cargo tank or in the cab of the vehicle. A motor vehicle operated under this paragraph shall, to the extent practicable, make deliveries on seasonally weight-restricted roads at times of the day when the highways used are the least vulnerable.