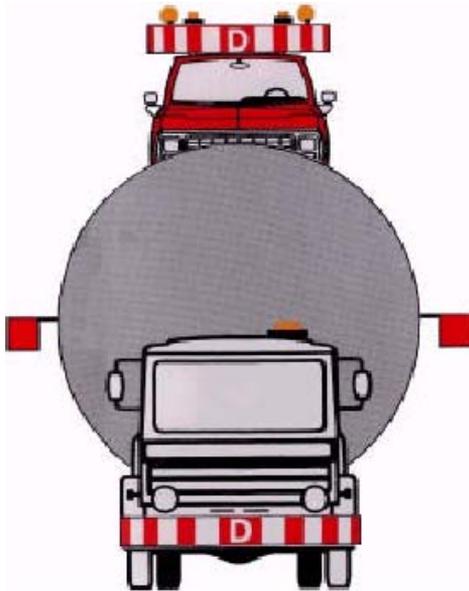


**Overdimensional Special Permit
Movements within Atlantic Canada**

**Escort Vehicle
Drivers' Handbook**



November 2008

Preface:

The document that follows has been prepared as an informational guidebook for Escort Vehicle drivers in support of harmonization of special permit conditions for movement of indivisible overdimensional vehicles and loads within Atlantic Canada.

Special Permits - General Information

*New Brunswick Dept of Transportation
(506) 453-3939*

*Prince Edward Island Transportation and Public Works:
(902) 368-5228*

*Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations:
(902) 424-5536*

*Newfoundland and Labrador Government Services:
(709) 729-2519*

Introduction

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

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 judgement.

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1. Driver Requirements

To qualify as an escort vehicle driver you should:

- Have a valid, full¹ driver's license from the province, territory or state in which you are resident
- Have no less than one year's experience with a full driver's license
- Have successfully completed a recognized course on defensive driving
- Comply with all terms, conditions, requirements and or regulations set forth by the agency(s) responsible for special permits for movement of overdimensional loads on the routes to be followed during the movement of the load.

¹ "Full License" - means having completed the last phase of graduated licensing program, where applicable

2. Escort Vehicle Requirements

a) Vehicle Requirements

Vehicles used to provide escort services during the movement of overdimensional loads must:

- have a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating no greater than 8000 kg
- have no more than 2 axles
- have a wheelbase of at least 2.5 m
- not carry cargo or tow a trailer. Only equipment and passengers related to the movement of the oversize/overweight load can be carried in the escort vehicle
- have clear rearward visibility from all mirrors
- have annual mechanical fitness inspections.

b) Equipment Requirements

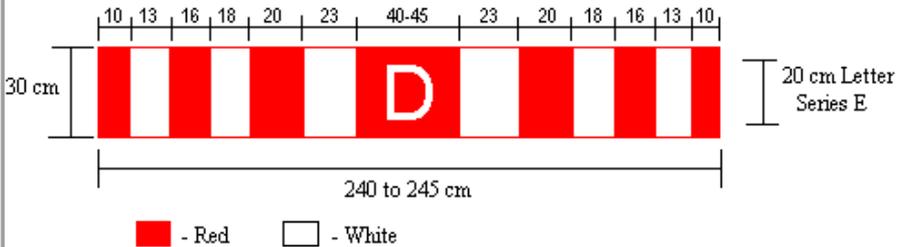
Each escort vehicle must be equipped with:

- Three approved warning devices (red flares or lamps, lanterns, reflectors or advance warning triangles)
- One warning flag per crew member for flagging during emergency situations, 40 cm by 40 cm, fluorescent red or orange, mounted on a staff and fastened at two consecutive corners
- One reflective vest per crew member
- One hard hat per crew member, which must be worn when out of the vehicle during escort operations.
- Three "Stop/slow" traffic control paddles for emergency situations
- One flashlight equipped with signal tube per crew member
- An approved "D" Sign, positioned so that it is readily visible to motorists approaching the overdimensional load (see following sections for specifications)

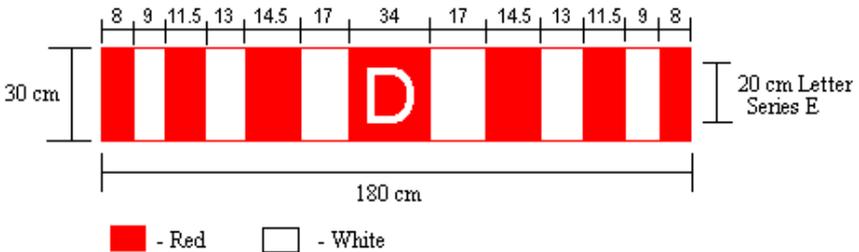
- A two-way radio which meets Communications Canada standards (for communicating with the load vehicle and other escort vehicles)
- A cellular telephone (for communication with police and emergency service agencies). If two escort vehicles are required for a movement of an overdimensional vehicle or load, only one cellular phone is required.
- A first aid kit and a fire extinguisher
- Additional safety equipment as may be needed for emergencies.

c) Overdimensional or “D” signs specifications

Large Sign for Oversize Vehicle Section Widths (cm)



Small Sign for Escort Vehicle Section Widths (cm)



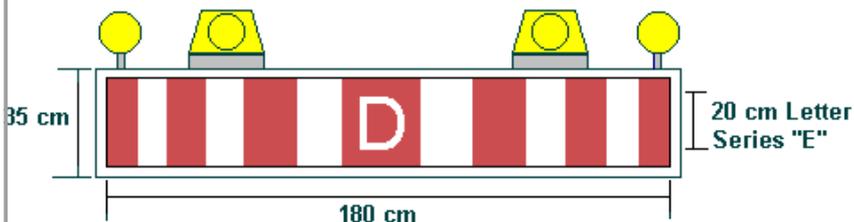
“D” Sign Requirements

a. Dimensions	Overdimensional Vehicle - 240 to 245 cm wide by 30 cm high Escort Vehicle - 180 cm wide by 30 cm high
b. Colour	White level II reflectance and stop sign red (# 712 3M or equivalent)
c. Material	Retro-reflective, on a hard, flat surface
d. Position	Visible from the rear and front of the overdimensional vehicle or load

d) "D" sign light box

Instead of the panel described in section c), the escort vehicle may be equipped with a lighted sign box, which meets the following specifications:

- the sign must be upright when in use, and clearly visible from the front and rear of the vehicle (the sign must be folded flat when not in use or not required, or must be removed from the vehicle)



- Box Dimensions - the 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. The box must shelter all wire connectors, switches, flashers, etc.
- Illumination - A sufficient number of lamps must be mounted in the box and spaced to give even lighting of the sign background across its full width.
- Sign Panel - the sign panel 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.
- 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.
- Inboard Lights - must consist of 2 standard 203-millimetre rotating amber lights, with 2 sealed beam units per lamp.

3. Escorting Overdimensional Loads

a) Rules of the Road

Traffic Signals and Signs

The traffic signals and signs, for all drivers must also be obeyed during escort operations. For example, escort drivers are required to stop for red lights and school buses and to drive strictly in accordance with all regulatory signing.

Road Markings

Road markings improve highway safety by providing important traffic control information to motorists. Escort operators should carefully observe all road markings and never drive to the left of a solid double yellow centerline.

Drivers Signals

Escort drivers should give proper signals in advance of turning at intersections or when changing lanes.

Maintain a Safe Following Distance

As a general rule, the two-second rule should be used to assure that a correct following distance is being maintained. To determine if the following distance is proper, the driver should note when the vehicle ahead passes a definite point on the road (such as a tar strip or telephone pole). Then the driver should count "one thousand and one, one thousand and two". If the driver reaches the mark before completing the count, the following distance is too close and a greater Interval is needed. The two-second rule is applicable regardless of vehicle speed. Escort drivers, who follow the overdimensional load or other traffic at distances less than a safe distance, are not giving themselves enough time or distance to respond to emergency situations.

Stopping Under Special Conditions

When the driver of the overdimensional load or the escort operator is forced to stop (except momentarily) on any portion of the road, the drivers should immediately set out three warning flares, torches, or reflectorized triangular warning signals to warn approaching traffic of the hazard. Every precaution should be

taken to remove the load and escort vehicles from the roadway

Right-Of-Way Rules

Escort drivers are required to obey all right-of-way rules, especially at intersections in urban areas and when entering or leaving a limited access highway. The size of the load is not justification for assuming that other drivers must yield to the load or the escort vehicles.

Defensive Driving

A defensive driver is a person who is always alert, and takes every reasonable precaution to prevent traffic mishaps, over and above what is required by law. Because the movement of every overdimensional load affects the normal flow of traffic on the highway, the escort driver must develop a positive attitude toward accident prevention. A defensive driver must anticipate possible accident problems by evaluating constantly changing situations and planning preventive measures. Escort drivers should consider the "accident prevention formula" which follows:

- *See the Hazard*: Think about what is going to happen as far ahead of encountering the situation as possible. Never assume everything will be "all right"
- *Understand the Defense*: There are specific ways of handling specific situations. Learn these ways and be prepared to apply them when the need arises
- *Act in Time*: Once you have perceived the hazard and determined the defense, act immediately. Never take a "wait and see" attitude

b) Movement of Overdimensional loads

Before a load that exceeds legal size and weight limits can be transported, the driver of the vehicle transporting the load must obtain the necessary special permit(s) from the appropriate authorities. 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 that cover escort operations.
- 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 overdimensional load.
- All escort vehicle drivers and the overdimensional load driver must be able to communicate at all times by two-way radio.
- Overdimensional load movements may not travel in convoy unless special permission has been given to the operators involved in the move. The driver of the overdimensional vehicle should take every opportunity to allow following traffic to pass. If traffic build-up behind the unit becomes heavy, the entire combined unit should move off the travelled portion of the roadway to allow traffic to pass safely.
- 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.
- Red or orange flags must be displayed at each of the four corners of the overdimensional load. These must be at least 40 cm x 40 cm (16" x 16") and be in good condition.
- Vehicle headlights and other non-flashing exterior lights should be turned on during the move, including those of the escort vehicle.
- "D" signs shall be properly displayed on the overdimensional vehicle and on each escort vehicle.
- Other standard conditions may also be imposed on the permit, and the escort vehicle driver should be aware of these conditions, including:

- Restrictions on days and/or times of travel;
- Limits on load overhangs;
- Speed limits;
- Flags, lights and warning devices;

It is the responsibility of the escort vehicle driver to make the travelling public aware of the presence of an overdimensional load and to warn traffic when necessary.

Escort vehicle drivers also help the driver of the vehicle transporting the load move the load as safely as possible with the least possible delay and inconvenience to the travelling public.

Depending on the size of the load and the type of highway, either front or rear escort vehicles, or both, will be required.

When permitted by provincial laws, one or more escort vehicle drivers or other appropriately trained personnel may be required to control traffic, whether due to an emergency situation or as a condition of the permit at bridges. All persons performing traffic control are responsible for knowing and abiding by the required procedures, policies and regulations in each province for controlling traffic.

c) Before the Trip

It is important for all members of the team responsible for moving an overdimensional load to check their equipment and to make sure that everyone understands the permit, the route and each person's responsibilities.

Being comfortable and familiar with the escort vehicle is an important factor, and drivers should familiarize themselves with the vehicle's performance and operating characteristics before escorting an overdimensional load.

- Check the permit for any special requirements or instructions.
- The escort driver should advise the permit holder whether the permitted load has the proper signing, lighting, and special requirements as designated on the permit, prior to escorting. Vehicles that do not meet or respect all of the conditions outlined on the permit will not be allowed to proceed from an inspection station or weigh scale, until the situation is corrected.
- Make sure everyone understands the route and directions to be taken.
- Plan ahead; verify any hazards or concerns that may be encountered along the route
- Confirm the load's dimensions before departing to understand the space required for turning and clearances for bridges, tunnels and roadside objects.
- 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.
- Check all radios and select an appropriate two-way channel.
- Each escort driver should check to ensure that they have their driver's license and escort certification (if required) are in their possession at all times during the trip so they are available for inspection by appropriate authorities. The operator of the oversize/ overweight load should also check to ensure the escort drivers are certified (if that is required). The permit must accompany the load in the cab of the truck.

d) During the trip

The safety of the travelling public is of primary importance. Escort drivers must obey all traffic laws and regulations - don't be tempted to assume that other drivers will yield the right of way because of the size of the load.

Alertness will help avoid collisions 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, failure to warn 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.

Traffic signals

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

If the escort vehicle passes through the intersection but the load is required to stop, the escort vehicle 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 vehicle is stopped by a red light which has been cleared by the load, the load driver should proceed, and the rear escort vehicle driver should catch up to the load as soon as possible.

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

Traffic Build-up

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 travelled portion of the roadway and

allow the traffic to pass safely.

Weigh Scales and Inspection Stations

Escort vehicles must accompany the overdimensional load to weigh scales and inspection stations. Drivers should be prepared for inspection of the escort vehicle, its equipment and confirmation of certification as a escort vehicle driver (if driver certification is required).

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.

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 they 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.

If a collision occurs

Avoid a second collision by pulling completely off the road. Turn on the vehicle's hazard warning lights and use red flares or lamps, lanterns, reflectors or advance warning triangles to warn approaching traffic of the problem.

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

- Get help: Dial 911 for police and ambulance. If you are in an area where no cellular phone connection is available, ask the next person who stops to phone for police and ambulance. Use the two-way radio but do not rely on it as a sole means of requesting aid.
- When trained personnel arrive (rescue squad, police, fire, etc.) give a brief summary of what you've done and ask if you can be of further assistance, but do not interfere with their efforts to care for the injured.

Reporting a Collision

Report to police authorities as quickly as possible any collision:

- in which a person is killed or injured, or
- in which a vehicle or other property is damaged, to the extent of reportable accidents.

e) Escort Vehicle Driver's Role

Front escort

The driver of the escort vehicle ahead of the overdimensional load will:

- Warn oncoming traffic an overdimensional load is following, by travelling 300 to 1000 metres ahead of the load and displaying an approved dimensional sign and flashing lights.
- Use a two-way radio to warn the load driver of any potential problems ahead, including hazards, pedestrians or obstructions such as parked vehicles, on the road ahead.
- Make sure the vehicles are following the route specified on the permit.
- Find safe places for the vehicles to pull over in order to allow following traffic to pass safely.
- Inform the driver of the overdimensional vehicle and rear escort that they are approaching a structure which will require a speed reduction as required by permit.

Rear escort

The driver of the escort vehicle following the overdimensional load will:

- Warn traffic approaching from the rear that an overdimensional load is ahead by travelling 100 to 300 metres behind the load and by displaying an approved dimensional sign and flashing lights.
- 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.
- Notify the front escort driver and the oversize / overweight load operator of traffic buildup and other delays to the normal flow of traffic.
- Notify the load driver of motorists attempting to pass the load.

Advance escort

In cases where the overdimensional load is very large, the special

permit may require three escort vehicles; usually two in the front and one in the rear.

The advance escort vehicle will normally be required to travel well ahead of the overdimensional load to provide advance warning of hazards and to warn and/or control other traffic prior to the arrival of the load.

f) After the Trip

When the trip is over, the amber flashing (or revolving) lights must be turned off, and any flags must be removed. The “D” sign(s) must be removed, folded down, or covered up, such that they are not visible by other traffic on the highway. “D” sign(s) may only be displayed on the highway when an oversize move is in progress.