

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2007**

**SESSION LAW 2008-221  
SENATE BILL 1695**

AN ACT TO MAKE VARIOUS CHANGES TO THE MOTOR VEHICLE LAWS RELATED TO DRIVERS LICENSES, REGISTRATION PLATES ISSUED TO FARM VEHICLES, AND VEHICLE SIZE AND WEIGHT LIMITATIONS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE TRANSPORTATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 20-7(a)(3) reads as rewritten:

- "(3) Class C. – A Class C license authorizes the holder to drive any of the following:
- a. A Class C motor vehicle that is not a commercial motor vehicle.
  - b. When operated by a volunteer member of a fire department, a rescue squad, or an emergency medical service (EMS) in the performance of duty, a Class A or Class B fire-fighting, rescue, or EMS motor vehicle or a combination of these vehicles.
  - c. A combination of noncommercial motor vehicles that have a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds but less than 26,001 pounds. This sub-subdivision does not apply to a Class C license holder less than 18 years of age."

**SECTION 2.** G.S. 20-88(b)(3) reads as rewritten:

- "(3) License plates issued at the farmer rate shall be placed upon trucks and truck-tractors that are operated ~~exclusively in the~~ for the primary purpose of carrying or transportation transporting of the applicant's farm products, raised or produced on his the applicant's farm, and farm supplies-supplies. The license plates shall not be used on a vehicle -and not-operated in hauling for hire."

**SECTION 3.** G.S. 20-115.1(g) reads as rewritten:

"(g) Under certain conditions, and after consultation with the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, the North Carolina Department of Transportation may designate State highway system roads in addition to those highways designated by the United States Secretary of Transportation for use by the vehicle combinations authorized in this section. Such designations by the Department shall only be made under the following conditions:

- (1) A determination of the public convenience and need for such designation;
- (2) A traffic engineering study which clearly shows the road proposed to be designated can safely accommodate and has sufficient capacity to handle these vehicle combinations; and
- (3) A public hearing is held or the opportunity for a public hearing is provided in each county through which the designated highway passes, after two weeks notice posted at the courthouse and published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county through which the designated State highway system road passes, and consideration is given to the comments received prior to the designation.

- (4) The Department may designate routes for one particular type of STAA (Surface Transportation Assistance Act) dimensioned vehicle when significant, substantial differences in their operating characteristics exist.

~~No portion of the State highway system within municipal corporate limits may be designated by the Department without concurrence by the municipal governing body. Also, the~~ The Department may not designate any portion of the State highway system that has been deleted or exempted by the United States Secretary of Transportation based on safety considerations. For the purpose of this section, any highway designated by the Department shall be deemed to be the same as a federal-aid primary highway designated by the United States Secretary of Transportation pursuant to 49 USC 2311 and 49 USC 2316, and the vehicle combinations authorized in this section shall be permitted to operate on such highway."

**SECTION 4.** G.S. 20-115.1(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) Motor vehicle combinations consisting of a semitrailer of not more than 53 feet in length and a truck tractor may be operated on ~~the interstate highways (except those exempted by the United States Secretary of Transportation pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 2311(i)) and federal aid primary system highways designated by the United States Secretary of Transportation~~ all primary highway routes of North Carolina provided that the motor vehicle combination meets the requirements of this subsection. The Department may, at any time, prohibit motor vehicle combinations on portions of any route on the State highway system. If the Department prohibits a motor vehicle combination on any route, it shall submit a written report to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee within six months of the prohibition clearly documenting through traffic engineering studies that the operation of a motor vehicle combination on that route cannot be safely accommodated and that the route does not have sufficient capacity to handle the vehicle combination. To operate on a primary highway route, a motor vehicle combination described in this subsection must meet all of the following requirements:

- (1) ~~Any~~ The motor vehicle combination must comply with the weight requirements in G.S. 20-118.
- (2) ~~A semitrailer in excess of 48 feet in length shall not be permitted unless;~~ must meet one or more of the following conditions:
  - a. ~~The distance between the kingpin of the trailer and the rearmost axle, or a point midway between the two rear axles, if the two rear axles are a tandem axle, does not exceed 41 feet; or feet.~~
  - b. ~~The semitrailer is used exclusively or primarily to transport vehicles in connection with motorsports competition events, and the distance between the kingpin of the trailer and the rearmost axle, or a point midway between the two rear axles, if the two rear axles are a tandem axle, does not exceed 46 feet; feet. and~~
- ~~(2)(3) Any~~ A semitrailer in excess of 48 feet is must be equipped with a rear underride guard 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 30 inches from the surface as measured with the vehicle empty and on a level surface."

**SECTION 5.** G.S. 20-116(e) reads as rewritten:

"(e) Except as provided by G.S. 20-115.1, no combination of vehicles coupled together shall consist of more than two units and no such combination of vehicles shall exceed a total length of 60 feet inclusive of front and rear bumpers, subject to the following exceptions: Motor vehicle combinations of one semitrailer of not more than ~~48-53~~ feet in length and a truck tractor (power unit) may exceed the 60-foot maximum length. Said length limitation shall not apply to vehicles operated in the daytime when transporting poles, pipe, machinery or other objects of a structural nature which cannot

readily be dismembered, nor to such vehicles transporting such objects operated at nighttime by a public utility when required for emergency repair of public service facilities or properties, but in respect to such night transportation every such vehicle and the load thereon shall be equipped with a sufficient number of clearance lamps on both sides and marker lamps upon the extreme ends of said projecting load to clearly mark the dimensions of such load: Provided that vehicles designed and used exclusively for the transportation of motor vehicles shall be permitted an overhang tolerance front or rear not to exceed five feet. Provided, that wreckers may tow a truck, combination tractor and trailer, trailer, or any other disabled vehicle or combination of vehicles to a place for repair, parking, or storage within 50 miles of the point where the vehicle was disabled and may tow a truck, tractor, or other replacement vehicle to the site of the disabled vehicle. Provided, however, that a combination of a house trailer used as a mobile home, together with its towing vehicle, shall not exceed a total length of 55 feet exclusive of front and rear bumpers. Provided further, that the said limitation that no combination of vehicles coupled together shall consist of more than two units shall not apply to trailers not exceeding three in number drawn by a motor vehicle used by municipalities for the removal of domestic and commercial refuse and street rubbish, but such combination of vehicles shall not exceed a total length of 50 feet inclusive of front and rear bumpers. Provided further, that the said limitation that no combination of vehicles coupled together shall consist of more than two units shall not apply to a combination of vehicles coupled together by a saddle mount device used to transport motor vehicles in a driveway service when no more than three saddle mounts are used and provided further, that equipment used in said combination is approved by the safety regulations of the Federal Highway Administration and the safety rules of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety."

**SECTION 6.** G.S. 20-116(j) reads as rewritten:

"(j) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the operation of self-propelled self-propelled grain combines or other farm equipment self-propelled, pulled-pulled, or otherwise, not exceeding 18-25 feet in width may be operated on any highway, except a highway or section of highway that is a fully controlled access highway or is a part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Farm equipment includes a vehicle that is designed exclusively to transport compressed seed cotton from a farm to a gin and has a self-loading bed. All such combines Combines or equipment which exceed 10 feet in width may be so-operated only if they meet all of under the following conditions: conditions listed in this subsection. A violation of one or more of these conditions does not constitute negligence per se.

- (1) ~~Said~~ The equipment may only be so-operated during daylight hours.
- (2) ~~Said~~ The equipment must display a red flag on front and rear, ~~said~~ rear ends. The flags shall not be smaller than three feet wide and four feet long and belong. The flags shall be attached to a stick, pole, staff, etc., not less than four feet long and they shall be so-attached to ~~said~~ the equipment as to be visible from both directions at all times while being operated on the public highway for not less than 300 feet.
- (3) Equipment covered by this section, which by necessity must travel more than 10 miles or where by nature of the terrain or obstacles the flags referred to in subdivision (2) of this subsection are not visible from both directions for 300 feet at any point along the proposed route, must be preceded at a distance of 300 feet and followed at a distance of 300 feet by a flagman in a vehicle having mounted thereon an appropriate warning light or flag. No flagman in a vehicle shall be required pursuant to this subdivision if the equipment is being moved under its own power or on a trailer from any field to another field, or from the normal place of storage of the vehicle to any field, for no more than ten miles and if visible from both directions for 300 feet at any point along the proposed route.

- (4) Every ~~such~~ piece of equipment so operated shall operate to the right of the center line when meeting traffic coming from the opposite direction and at all other times when possible and practical.
- ~~(5) Violation of this section shall not constitute negligence per se.~~
- (6) When ~~said~~ the equipment is causing a delay in traffic, the operator of ~~said~~ the equipment shall move the equipment off the paved portion of the highway at the nearest practical location until the vehicles following ~~said~~ the equipment have passed.
- (7) The equipment shall be operated in the designed transport position that minimizes equipment width. No removal of equipment or appurtenances is required under this subdivision."

**SECTION 7.** G.S. 20-118(c)(12) reads as rewritten:

"(12) Subsections (b) and (e) of this section do not apply to a vehicle that ~~(i) is hauling agricultural crops from the farm where they were grown to first market, (ii) is within 35 miles of that farm, (iii) does not operate on an interstate highway or posted bridge while hauling the crops, and meets one of the following descriptions:~~ meets all of the conditions set out below:

- a. ~~Is a five axle combination with a gross weight of no more than 90,000 pounds, a single axle weight of no more than 22,000 pounds, a tandem axle weight of no more than 42,000 pounds, and a length of at least 51 feet between the first and last axles of the combination.~~ Is hauling agricultural crops from the farm where the crop is grown to the closest market.
- b. Repealed by Session Laws 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 761, s. 13.
- b1. Does not operate on an interstate highway or exceed any posted bridge weight limits during transportation or hauling of agricultural products.
- c. ~~Is a four axle combination with a gross weight that does not exceed the limit set in subdivision (b)(3) of this section, Does not exceed a single-axle weight of no more than 22,000 pounds, and a tandem-axle weight of no more than 42,000 pounds.~~ pounds, or a gross weight of 90,000 pounds."

**SECTION 8.** G.S. 20-118(k) reads as rewritten:

"(k) From September 1 through March 1 of each year, a vehicle which is equipped with a self-loading bed and which is designed and used exclusively to transport compressed seed cotton from the farm to a cotton gin may operate on the highways of the State, except interstate highways, with a tandem-axle weight not exceeding ~~44,000~~ 50,000 pounds. Such vehicles shall be exempt from light-traffic road limitations only from point of origin on the light-traffic road to the nearest State-maintained road which is not posted to prohibit the transportation of statutory load limits. This exemption does not apply to restricted, posted bridge structures."

**SECTION 9.** G.S. 20-118(c)(15) reads as rewritten:

- "(15) Subsections (b) and (e) of this section do not apply to a vehicle or vehicle combination that meets all of the conditions below, but all other enforcement provisions of this Article remain applicable:
- a. Is hauling wood residuals, including wood chips, sawdust, mulch, or tree bark from any site; is hauling raw logs to first market; or is transporting bulk soil, bulk rock, sand, sand rock, or asphalt millings from a site that does not have a certified scale for weighing the vehicle.
  - b. Does not operate on an interstate highway, a posted light-traffic road, except as provided by subdivision (c)(5) of this section, or a posted bridge.

- c. Does not exceed a maximum gross weight 4,000 pounds in excess of what is allowed in subsection (b) of this section.
- d. Does not exceed a single-axle weight of more than 22,000 pounds and a tandem-axle weight of more than 42,000 pounds."

**SECTION 10.** This act becomes effective September 1, 2008.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 17<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2008.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue  
President of the Senate

s/ Joe Hackney  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley  
Governor

Approved 6:45 p.m. this 17<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2008