

expert ease

Heavy vehicle rule change

Motor

A rule change to improve vehicle productivity

Heavy vehicles can now carry larger loads, thanks to the amended Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2002 (Rule 41001). As of May 1st this year, permit authorities can issue permits for certain heavy vehicles to operate at higher mass limits - up to 53 tonnes, on specified routes. It also allows an increase in length to 22 metres for certain vehicles without having to obtain a permit.

The aim of the changes is to significantly improve the operational productivity of heavy vehicles.

It has been projected that New Zealand's future freight task (total tonnage multiplied by total distance) will double over the next 20 years. This has been a key reason for increasing the maximum permitted weight and length of vehicles as freight will need to be moved more efficiently.

Trials have shown that under the right conditions these changes can improve vehicle productivity by increasing load capacity and reducing the number of vehicle movements required to distribute freight. In turn this reduces fuel consumption, reduces emissions and improves safety. All of these factors contribute to the Government's efficiency and productivity objectives.

Some local councils have expressed concern about the detrimental effects on road quality and driver safety due to transport operators having the option to carry more weight should it be required.



The Government has also been made aware of public concerns over larger and heavier trucks being on the road. These were taken into account during the trials and development of the Rule amendment.

To allay public concerns about environmental and safety issues, the Ministry of Transport commissioned studies to examine the noise, vibrations, emissions and safety implications of operating heavier vehicles. These studies revealed that there were no discernable changes in environmental factors and that heavier

vehicles can be upgraded to ensure that braking and towing safety performance is maintained.

These vehicles will be required to meet all current safety standards. The increase in the mass of existing vehicles could have an impact on their centre of gravity and the operational Static Rollover Threshold (SRT). In some cases, this may require adjustments to driving techniques, particularly when cornering.

However, vehicles will still be required to meet the established standards for the SRT. New Zealand Transport Agency will continue

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to work with the transport sector to ensure driver education and training issues are addressed.

In order to carry the additional weight transport operators will have to apply for a permit and will only be able to operate on specific routes.

At this stage there will be no changes to our underwriting approach to heavy vehicles as it is too early to gather data or identify trends. We will however, be keeping a watching brief.



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Written by: Jim Wiles
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If you have any questions, please call Lumley Commercial Motor on **0800 111 888**.

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