

§ 20-119. Special permits for vehicles of excessive size or weight; fees.

(a) The Department of Transportation may, in its discretion, upon application, for good cause being shown therefor, issue a special permit in writing authorizing the applicant to operate or move a vehicle of a size or weight exceeding a maximum specified in this Article upon any highway under the jurisdiction and for the maintenance of which the body granting the permit is responsible. However, the Department is not authorized to issue any permit to operate or move over the State highways twin trailers, commonly referred to as double bottom trailers. Every such permit shall be carried in the vehicle to which it refers and shall be open to inspection by any peace officer. The authorities in any incorporated city or town may grant permits in writing and for good cause shown, authorizing the applicant to move a vehicle over the streets of such city or town, the size or weight exceeding the maximum expressed in this Article. The Department of Transportation shall issue rules to implement this section.

(a1) **(Effective until July 1, 2025)** Where permitted by the posted road and bridge limits, the Department may issue a single trip permit for a vehicle or vehicle combination responding to an emergency event that could result in severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or man-made emergency as determined by either the Secretary of Public Safety or the Secretary of Transportation or their designees. A permit issued under this subsection may allow for travel from a specific origin to destination and return 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays. Permits issued under this subsection shall include a requirement for banners, flags, and other safety devices, as determined by the Department, and a requirement for a law enforcement escort or a vehicle being operated by a certified escort vehicle operator if traveling between sunset and sunrise. To obtain authorization to travel during restricted times, application shall be made with any required documentation to the proper officials as designated by the Department. If an emergency permit is issued under this subsection, the requestor shall contact the Department of Transportation's central permit office on the next business day to complete any further documentation and pay the applicable fees.

(a1) **(Effective July 1, 2025)** Where permitted by the posted road and bridge limits, the Department may issue a single trip permit for a vehicle or vehicle combination responding to an emergency event that could result in severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or man-made emergency as determined by either the Commander of the State Highway Patrol or the Secretary of Transportation or their designees. A permit issued under this subsection may allow for travel from a specific origin to destination and return 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays. Permits issued under this subsection shall include a requirement for banners, flags, and other safety devices, as determined by the Department, and a requirement for a law enforcement escort or a vehicle being operated by a certified escort vehicle operator if traveling between sunset and sunrise. To obtain authorization to travel during restricted times, application shall be made with any required documentation to the proper officials as designated by the Department. If an emergency permit is issued under this subsection, the requestor shall contact the Department of Transportation's central permit office on the next business day to complete any further documentation and pay the applicable fees.

(b) Upon the issuance of a special permit for an oversize or overweight vehicle by the Department of Transportation in accordance with this section, the applicant shall pay to the Department for a single trip permit a fee of twelve dollars (\$12.00) for each dimension over lawful dimensions, including height, length, width, and weight up to 132,000 pounds. For overweight vehicles, the applicant shall pay to the Department for a single trip permit in addition to the fee imposed by the previous sentence a fee of three dollars (\$3.00) per 1,000 pounds over 132,000 pounds.

Upon the issuance of an annual permit for a single vehicle, the applicant shall pay a fee in accordance with the following schedule:

Commodity:

Annual Fee:

Annual Permit to	
Move House Trailers or Trailer Frames	\$200.00
Annual Permit to Move Other Commodities	\$185.00

In addition to the fees set out in this subsection, applications for permits that require an engineering study for pavement or structures or other special conditions or considerations shall be accompanied by a nonrefundable application fee of one hundred dollars (\$100.00).

This subsection does not apply to farm equipment or machinery being used at the time for agricultural purposes, nor to the moving of a house as provided for by the license and permit requirements of Article 16 of this Chapter. Fees will not be assessed for permits for oversize and overweight vehicles issued to any agency of the United States Government or the State of North Carolina, its agencies, institutions, subdivisions, or municipalities if the vehicle is registered in the name of the agency.

(b1) Neither the Department nor the Board may require review or renewal of annual permits, with or without fee, more than once per calendar year.

(b2) The Department shall issue single trip permits for the transport and delivery of a manufactured or modular home with a maximum width of 16 feet and a gutter edge that does not exceed three inches from the manufacturer to an authorized dealership within this State, for delivery of a manufactured or modular home by a manufacturer and authorized dealer or their transporters to a location within this State, and for transport and delivery of a manufactured or modular home by a homeowner from one location to another within this State. The Department shall promulgate rules that set the days allowed for transport and delivery, times of day transport or delivery may occur, the display and use of banners and escort vehicles for public safety purposes, and any other reasonable rules as are necessary to promote public safety and commerce. For the purposes of this subsection, manufactured home and modular home shall have the same meanings as those terms are defined in G.S. 105-164.3.

(b3) For a special permit issued under this section for the transport and delivery of cargo, containers, or other equipment, the Department may allow travel after sunset if the Department determines it will be safe and expedite traffic flow. The Department shall not include a term or condition prohibiting travel after sunset for any permitted shipments going to or from international ports. Nothing in this subsection precludes the Department from restricting movements it determines to be unsafe.

(c) Nothing in this section shall require the Department of Transportation to issue any permit for any load.

(d) **(Effective until July 1, 2025)** For each violation of any of the terms or conditions of a special permit issued or where a permit is required but not obtained under this section the Department of Public Safety shall assess a civil penalty for each violation against the registered owner of the vehicle as follows:

- (1) A fine of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) for operating without the proper number of certified escorts as determined by the actual loaded weight or size of the vehicle combination.
- (1a) A fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for any of the following: operating without the issuance of a permit, moving a load off the route specified in the permit, falsifying information to obtain a permit, or failing to comply with dimension restrictions of a permit.
- (2) A fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) for moving loads beyond the distance allowances of an annual permit covering the movement of house trailers from the retailer's premises or for operating in violation of time of travel restrictions.
- (3) A fine of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for any other violation of the permit conditions or requirements imposed by applicable regulations.

The Department of Transportation may refuse to issue additional permits or suspend existing permits if there are repeated violations of subdivision (1), (1a), or (2) of this subsection.

(d) **(Effective July 1, 2025)** For each violation of any of the terms or conditions of a special permit issued or where a permit is required but not obtained under this section the State Highway Patrol shall assess a civil penalty for each violation against the registered owner of the vehicle as follows:

- (1) A fine of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) for operating without the proper number of certified escorts as determined by the actual loaded weight or size of the vehicle combination.
- (1a) A fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for any of the following: operating without the issuance of a permit, moving a load off the route specified in the permit, falsifying information to obtain a permit, or failing to comply with dimension restrictions of a permit.
- (2) A fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) for moving loads beyond the distance allowances of an annual permit covering the movement of house trailers from the retailer's premises or for operating in violation of time of travel restrictions.
- (3) A fine of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for any other violation of the permit conditions or requirements imposed by applicable regulations.

The Department of Transportation may refuse to issue additional permits or suspend existing permits if there are repeated violations of subdivision (1), (1a), or (2) of this subsection.

(d1) **(Effective until July 1, 2025)** In addition to the penalties assessed under subsection (d) of this section, the Department of Public Safety shall assess a civil penalty, not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), in accordance with G.S. 20-118(e)(1) and (e)(3) against the registered owner of the vehicle for any of the following:

- (1) Operating without the issuance of a required permit.
- (2) Operating off permitted route of travel.
- (3) Failing to comply with travel restrictions of the permit.
- (4) Operating without the proper vehicle registration or license for the class of vehicle being operated.

A violation of this subsection constitutes operating a vehicle without a special permit.

(d1) **(Effective July 1, 2025)** In addition to the penalties assessed under subsection (d) of this section, the State Highway Patrol shall assess a civil penalty, not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), in accordance with G.S. 20-118(e)(1) and (e)(3) against the registered owner of the vehicle for any of the following:

- (1) Operating without the issuance of a required permit.
- (2) Operating off permitted route of travel.
- (3) Failing to comply with travel restrictions of the permit.
- (4) Operating without the proper vehicle registration or license for the class of vehicle being operated.

A violation of this subsection constitutes operating a vehicle without a special permit.

(e) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the permit fees provided in G.S. 20-119 shall be adjusted periodically to assure that the revenue generated by the fees is equal to the cost to the Department of administering the Oversize/Overweight Permit Unit Program within the Division of Highways. At least every two years, the Department shall review and compare the revenue generated by the permit fees and the cost of administering the program, and shall report to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee created in G.S.120-70.50 its recommendations for adjustments to the permit fees to bring the revenues and the costs into alignment.

(f) The Department of Transportation shall issue rules to establish an escort driver training and certification program for escort vehicles accompanying oversize/overweight loads. Department issued eligibility requirements for escort driver training and certification shall not include a minimum age for an escort driver greater than 18 years of age or that the applicant possess a commercial drivers license. A person that possesses a valid Class A commercial drivers license may sit for an escort vehicle certification examination without meeting any additional education or training requirements. Any driver operating a vehicle escorting an oversize/overweight load shall meet any training requirements and obtain certification under the rules issued pursuant to this subsection. These rules may provide for reciprocity with other states having similar escort certification programs. The Department shall allow third parties, including employers of escort drivers, to train and certify escort drivers pursuant to the rules issued by the Department to implement this subsection. Certification credentials for the driver of an escort vehicle shall be carried in the vehicle and be readily available for inspection by law enforcement personnel. The escort and training certification requirements of this subsection shall not apply to the transportation of agricultural machinery until October 1, 2004. The Department of Transportation shall develop and implement an in-house training program for agricultural machinery escorts by September 1, 2004. A motor vehicle intended to be used as an escort vehicle must meet all of the following requirements:

- (1) Meets all legal requirements for travel on a roadway in the State of North Carolina.
- (2) Is a single motor vehicle with a GVWR of at least 2,000 pounds and not more than 26,000 pounds.
- (3) Is not transporting hazardous materials while being used as an escort vehicle.
- (4) Is not pulling a trailer while being used as an escort vehicle.
- (5) Is equipped with lighting that is visible from all directions.

(g) The Department of Transportation shall issue annual overwidth permits for the following:

- (1) A vehicle carrying agricultural equipment or machinery from the dealer to the farm or from the farm to the dealer that does not exceed 14 feet in width. A permit issued under this subdivision is valid for unlimited movement without escorts on all State highways where the overwidth vehicle does not exceed posted bridge and load limits.
- (2) A boat or boat trailer whose outside width equals or exceeds 120 inches. A permit issued under this subdivision must restrict a vehicle's towing of the boat or boat trailer to daylight hours only.

(h) **(Effective until July 1, 2025)** No law enforcement officer shall issue a citation to a person for a violation of this section if the officer is able to determine by electronic means that the person has a permit valid at the time of the violation but does not have the permit in his or her possession. Any person issued a citation pursuant to this section who does not have the permit in his or her possession at the time of the issuance of the citation shall not be responsible for a violation, and the Department of Public Safety may not impose any fines under this section if the person submits evidence to the Department of the existence of a permit valid at the time of the violation within 30 days of the date of the violation.

(h) **(Effective July 1, 2025)** No law enforcement officer shall issue a citation to a person for a violation of this section if the officer is able to determine by electronic means that the person has a permit valid at the time of the violation but does not have the permit in his or her possession. Any person issued a citation pursuant to this section who does not have the permit in his or her possession at the time of the issuance of the citation shall not be responsible for a violation, and the State Highway Patrol may not impose any fines under this section if the person submits

evidence to the Department of the existence of a permit valid at the time of the violation within 30 days of the date of the violation.

(i) One, two, or three steel coils, transported on the same vehicle, shall be considered a nondivisible load for purposes of permit issuance pursuant to this section.

(j) Electric vehicle batteries, transported on the same vehicle with a weight up to 132,000 pounds, shall be considered a nondivisible load for purposes of permit issuance pursuant to this section. In addition to the fee set out in subsection (b) of this section, upon issuance of an annual permit to transport electric vehicle batteries, the applicant shall pay to the Department a fee of four hundred ninety-eight dollars (\$498.00). (1937, c. 407, s. 83; 1957, c. 65, s. 11; 1959, c. 1129; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 34; 1981, c. 690, ss. 31, 32; c. 736, ss. 1, 2; 1989, c. 54; 1991, c. 604, ss. 1, 2; c. 689, s. 334; 1993, c. 539, s. 357; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 2000-109, ss. 7(a), 7(f), 7(g); 2001-424, s. 27.10; 2003-383, s. 7; 2004-124, s. 30.3E(a), (b); 2004-145, s. 3; 2005-361, s. 4; 2007-290, s. 2; 2008-160, s. 2; 2008-229, s. 2; 2009-376, ss. 7, 8; 2011-145, s. 19.1(g); 2011-358, s. 1; 2016-90, s. 2.1(b); 2017-97, s. 1; 2024-30, s. 23(a); 2024-45, s. 19; 2024-57, s. 3E.2(k).)