



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Oversize & Overweight Permit Section
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Escort Requirements

Escort (Pilot Car) Vehicles:

Escort vehicles (also called pilot cars) are used to warn motorists of an unusual roadway condition such as a slow moving or extra-wide load on the roadway. Based on loaded dimensions, the road authority (i.e. Mn/DOT) will determine the minimum escort requirements that an operator (Permittee) is required to have.

An escort vehicle can only be a passenger car, SUV, van or pickup truck in good operating condition and properly equipped. The driver of the escort vehicle shall be at least 18 years of age.

An escort, while performing the duties of escorting an over dimensional load, cannot perform other duties such as flagging or operating remote-controlled rear steering on the loaded vehicle. The escort vehicle cannot tow another vehicle while escorting.

The appropriate "Wide Load" or "Long Load" sign shall be displayed on top of the escort vehicle and the sign must be clean and legible to the traffic it is warning. If using a single flashing yellow/amber warning light, it should be mounted as close to the center of the sign board as practical. If using dual flashing yellow/amber warning lights, they should be mounted on each side of the sign board as far apart as practical.

The lead escort vehicle shall precede the escorted load between 300 feet and 700 feet. A rear escort vehicle shall follow at a safe distance but close enough to be readily identified with the escorted load.

Each individual permitted vehicle shall have the escort vehicle(s) required by permit. Convoying of more than one permitted vehicle is not allowed unless specifically authorized by the road authority.

Minnesota has three distinct escort types: civilian, LPA (Licensed Protective Agent), and Peace Officer. The distinctions between them are:

- A **civilian** escort is an individual with a valid driver's license, at least 18 years of age, in a properly-equipped automobile or pickup truck.
- An **LPA** escort is basically a civilian escort but with the added statutory authority to control or direct traffic as required. An LPA escort vehicle is not an authorized emergency vehicle and cannot display red lights or force

oncoming traffic to yield. An LPA escort must be certified as an LPA under MN Statute 326.338.

- A **Peace Officer** escort is a MN-licensed peace officer (police) using an authorized emergency vehicle displaying red/blue lights. A Peace Officer escort is the only escort type allowed that can require oncoming traffic to yield right of way whenever an oncoming wide load encroaches over a two-lane roadway centerline.

A Peace Officer (police) escort will be required whenever a load requires the transport vehicle to travel the wrong way on a roadway or whenever MN State Patrol and/or Mn/DOT personnel believe an extreme safety hazard exists that can be remediated only by a licensed peace officer escort.

It is the responsibility of the Permittee to arrange for, coordinate with, and pay for required escort(s).

A Permittee can exceed the minimum number or type of escorts required if they choose, however they **cannot reduce** the number or type of escort required. For example, if a permit requires a Peace Officer escort, then an LPA escort cannot be substituted. If a permit requires an LPA escort, then a civilian escort cannot be substituted. Conversely, if a permit requires a civilian escort the Permittee can substitute that with an LPA escort if they choose.

Generally, escort vehicles will be required when:

- Loads exceed 14'6" wide up to 16'0" wide - one rear escort on divided roadways; front and rear escort of non-divided roadways.
- Loads exceed 16'0" wide - front and rear escort.
- Loads longer than 95'0" and up to 110'0" – one rear escort.
- Loads exceed 110'0" long – front and rear escort.
- For night travel, front and rear escort required for loads over 10'0" wide and/or over 85'0" long.

Authority	Peace Officer *	LPA**	Civilian
Use Red Lights?	Y	N	N
Cross Centerline?	Y	N	N
Perform Traffic Control?	Y	Y	N
Provide early warning to motorists?	Y	Y	Y
Statewide?	MN State Patrol	Y	Y

* A licensed MN peace officer (police) in an authorized emergency vehicle, using red lights and having jurisdiction over the road segment traveled on.

** LPA = Licensed Protective Agent, as defined in MN Statute 326.338.

Note: Flashing amber LED lighting at all corners of vehicle or load; and every 20 feet along length of load; and at widest point(s) of load can be used in lieu of escorts during night travel. The LED lights must be visible from a distance of at least 500 feet.

Warning Lights:

A warning light means an electric light operated by battery or other power source and that is visible from a distance of not less than 500 feet under normal atmospheric conditions.

Flashing warning lights can be white or amber to the front and red or amber to the rear.

- Two simultaneously flashing warning lights, spaced as far apart as practical with an "Oversize Load", "Wide Load", or "Long Load" sign, shall flash at a rate of 60-90 flashes per minute. The light's lens shall be a minimum of 4 inches diameter (or a minimum lens surface area of 12.5 square inches).
- Instead of a pair of flashing lights, either one or two strobe lights or rotating beacon lights may be used.

For night movements, steady amber or yellow warning light(s) must be used in lieu of flags at all points where flags are required for daylight movement, in addition to the flashing light requirement listed above.

Warning lights shall be mounted a minimum of 20 inches above the ground and be clearly visible to the traffic it is warning. On escort vehicles, warning lights and signs shall be placed as high on the vehicle as practical.

Warning lights must be turned off, covered or removed when not escorting an oversized load.

Signs:

"Wide Load", Long Load" or "Oversize Load" signs on the escort vehicle shall meet the following requirements:

- Be constructed of a rigid material or mounted on a flat surface that makes the sign flat and legible. The sign shall be clean and in good repair.
- Be a minimum size of 12 inches tall by 60 inches long.
- Have a yellow background with black lettering.
- Letters shall be 8 inch series C with a 1-1/8 inch brush stroke.
- The signs shall be lighted when used between sunset and sunrise. The lighting must make the signs readable from a distance of 500 feet.

Use of Sign:

- "Wide Load" signs are to be used when loaded width exceeds 12'0" during daylight moves and when loaded width exceeds 10'0" during night moves.
- "Long Load" sign is to be used when loaded length exceeds 85'0" for combination and width doesn't exceed 12'0" during day or 10'0" during night move.
- An "Oversize Load" sign may be used in lieu of Wide Load or Long Load signs listed above.
- Signs shall not extend beyond the left side fender line or more than six inches beyond the right side fender line.

Communications:

There must be radio communication at all times between the permitted vehicle and all escorts involved with the move.

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1. Panel Size 5' x 1'
2. Black Lettering on Yellow Background
3. WIDE or LONG LOAD is 8' Series C with 1 1/8" Stroke
4. 3/8" Black Border

**Sign Specifications for
VEHICLES ESCORTING
WIDE OR LONG LOADS**

**Sign is to be
DISPLAYED ONLY
WHEN NEEDED**

Sign Specification for Vehicles (12-2002)