

# Large Trucks

## Chapter 9

Large Trucks are a concern due to the size and load differential between 4, 5 and 6 axle larger truck units and passenger vehicles. There is additional focus on fatigue related to long haul operations. Overall, truck crash and fatality rates have improved over the years. The fatality rate has decreased at a slower pace.



Currently, many Large Truck crashes occur on secondary roads. Attention is being given to increasing weight limits on Maine interstate roads that is designed to take some traffic off more local roads.

In December 2009, the U.S. Congress authorized a one-year pilot program that allowed Maine and Vermont to use their respective state weight limits on their Interstate Highways, instead of the federal truck-weight cap of 80,000 pounds. Through two executive orders and followed by state legislation, Governor Baldacci and the Maine Legislature acted quickly and modified state law to allow three-axle truck tractors with three-axle semi-trailers at 100,000 pounds gross vehicle weight (GVW) to use Maine's entire Interstate system. The purpose and effect of this change is to divert large trucks from non-Interstate highways and onto the Interstate. Previously, Maine law contained separate truck-weight limits for the Interstate and non-Interstate highways, and these six-axle trucks were only authorized to operate on the Maine Turnpike, from its southerly terminus to the New Hampshire border.

Potential benefits of moving truck traffic from two-lane state roads that pass through local communities to the four-lane, divided highway with access control (the Interstate) include improved transportation system safety, reduced shipping costs, and reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. In previous years, MaineDOT has performed extensive analyses that predicted and quantified these benefits, and since implementation of the pilot project, the department has been assisting the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with its required six-month report to Congress on the pilot's impacts. The Interstate Highway Truck weights-White Paper report was prepared by Maine DOT on September 10, 2010.

