

Changes to Articulated Vehicle Weight Limits



Frequently Asked Questions

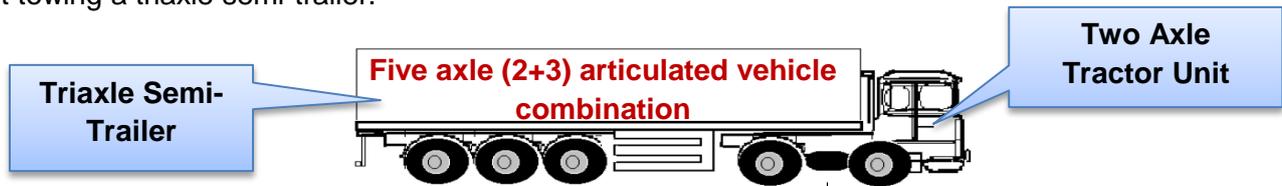
The ending of the '42 tonne derogation' for 2+3 articulated vehicle combinations

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1. What is a (2+3) axle articulated vehicle combination?

A 2+3 articulated vehicle combination has a total of five axles and consists of a two axle articulated tractor unit towing a triaxle semi-trailer.



2. What does “Design Gross Vehicle Weight” (DGWV) mean?

Design Gross Vehicle Weight (DGWV) means the gross weight of a vehicle laden with the heaviest load which it can reasonably carry. This must take into consideration; the engine, brakes, tyres and general construction of the vehicle and shall, until the contrary is shown, be taken to be its design gross weight as specified by its manufacturer or an automotive engineer.

3. What does “Gross Combination Weight” mean?

Gross Combination Weight is the weight of the tractor unit, semi-trailer and the load being carried.

4. What does the “National Weight Limit” mean?

Goods vehicles (and their trailers) with a DGWV exceeding 3,500kg and passenger vehicles with passenger accommodation for more than eight passengers must adhere to predefined maximum permitted weights and dimensions for use on roads in Ireland. These are outlined in a leaflet that we have prepared for the guidance of industry, hauliers and interested members of the public, a copy of which can be downloaded [here](#).

5. What does “Appropriate Motor Vehicle” mean?

"Appropriate motor vehicle" means a mechanically propelled vehicle having at least three axles, twin tyres, air suspension or an equivalent suspension on each driving axle and ABS brakes. The vehicle must also be fitted with an authorisation plate (i.e. a national weights & dimensions plate) in the format illustrated in Section 2 of the [HCV Manual](#).

6. What does “Appropriate Semi-Trailer” mean?

An “Appropriate Semi Trailer” means a semi-trailer which has an air suspension or an equivalent suspension and ABS brakes. The vehicle must also be fitted with an authorisation plate (i.e. a national weights & dimensions plate) in the format illustrated in Section 2 of the [HCV Manual](#).

Note that the ‘appropriate semi-trailer’ concept came into force on 1st April 2013 and applies to both new and existing semi-trailers (irrespective of the number of axles fitted) operating as part of a combination of vehicles which are permitted to operate at gross combination weights in excess of 40 tonnes.

7. What is the “42 tonne’ derogation”?

Since 2003, 2+3 articulated vehicle combinations have been permitted to operate at a gross combination weight of 42 tonnes. Normally these combinations would only have been allowed to operate at a gross combination weight of 40 tonnes, but an extra 2 tonne temporary allowance was given so that owners/operators could renew their existing fleet of two axle tractor units with more road friendly three axle ones.

8. Why is the “42 tonne’ derogation” coming to an end?

This FAQ document is intended as a general guide for industry, hauliers and interested members of the public. It is not an interpretation of the law.

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In 2011, a study commissioned by the National Roads Authority (NRA), on behalf of the Dept. of Transport, Tourism & Sport (DTTAS) indicated that

- (i) Removing the current derogation for 42 tonnes on a 5-axle vehicle and reverting to a limit of 40 tonnes would achieve a reduction in pavement damage of approximately 10%.
- (ii) Replacing the current allowable GVW of 42 tonnes on 5-axle vehicles to 46 tonnes on 6-axle vehicles would achieve a 30% decrease in pavement damage;
- (iii) A move away from 5-axle towards 6-axle vehicles would prove beneficial with respect to fatigue life of bridge joints and bearings as this would reduce the cumulative number of axles required to carry a given quantity of freight.

However, as a direct consequence of the continued extension of the 42 tonne derogation for a 2+3 five axle articulated vehicle combinations, the uptake of the more road friendly 3+3 six axle articulated vehicle combination at 44 tonnes has been impeded. This is due to the fact that the 2 tonne GVW difference between the two vehicle combinations equates to only a 1 tonne increase in payload for a 3+3 six axle articulated vehicle combination. To account for this and encourage their wider use, in April 2013 the Minister introduced Regulations allowing an increase to a GVW of 46 tonne for six axle articulated vehicle combinations.

9. When will the “42 tonne derogation” expire?

The national weight limit for 2+3 articulated vehicle combinations will revert from 42 to 40 tonnes from **1st July 2016**.

10. What are my options after it expires?

If you already operate at or close to the 42 tonne derogated national limit for 2+3 articulated vehicle combinations, (and operating at 40 tonnes from 1st July 2016 is not an option for you), you may wish to consider switching to using a triaxle tractor unit. This will allow you to avail of the extra payload capacity given to six-axle combinations, therefore permitting you to operate at gross combination weights of up to 46 tonnes.

11. If I retrofit an additional axle to my vehicle, is it sufficient to have it certified by Suitably Qualified Individual (SQI)?

No. Since 1st April 2013 axles retrofitted to existing two axle tractor units must be certified by the **original vehicle manufacturer or his authorised Irish distributor**. Without this certification, you will not be able to have your vehicle re-plated by an NSAI authorised plating centre or data on your vehicle’s registration certificate (VRC) updated by the DVCSD.

Note: An SQI means a mechanical or automotive engineer, an automotive assessor or a person with similar qualifications who, by reason of his or her competence, experience and independence, is an appropriate person to assess the fitness and safety of a vehicle and who carries appropriate indemnity relative to his or her position.

However, the RSA are considering the feasibility of introducing a dedicated axle retrofit scheme for Heavy Goods Vehicles in advance of the current derogation expiring from 1st July 2016. Such a scheme would not only be open to vehicle manufacturers and their authorised distributors, but would also be available to SQI’s. Should it be concluded the introduction of such a national scheme for verifying the standards of retrofitted

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axles to HGV's is feasible, the RSA will publicise the details in advance of the July 2016 deadline. In the interim however, retrofitted axles must be certified by the original manufacturer or their authorised Irish distributor only.

12. If I retrofit an additional axle for the purpose of 44 tonne operation, what requirements must I meet?

Before you can operate at 44 tonnes, your vehicle must satisfy the criteria of an "appropriate motor vehicle", i.e. the vehicle must have at least three axles, twin tyres, ABS brakes and air suspension or an equivalent suspension on each driving axle

Furthermore the modification must be certified by the original vehicle manufacturer (or his authorised Irish distributor) on headed paper which should list the following;

1. Vehicle Make;
2. Vehicle Model;
3. Vehicle Registration Number;
4. Vehicle Chassis Number;
5. Number of Passenger Seats (bus only)

The letter must state:

6. The alterations, modifications made to the vehicle.
7. The standard of workmanship and specifications.
8. Both the original and new Design Gross Vehicle Weight (DGVW) & Gross Combination Weight¹.
9. Both the original and new Unladen Vehicle Weight.
10. Both the original and new Design Axle Weights.
11. That the alteration does not diminish the technical status or integrity of the vehicle.
12. That the vehicle is safe to use on the road as a bus/goods vehicle (as appropriate).
13. The vehicle must retain the original VIN plate alongside the new VIN plate.
14. Signature of responsible person on behalf of the original vehicle manufacturer (builder) or his authorised Irish distributor.

Contact details for the main HGV distributors in Ireland are available [here](#) and once you have the required certification you can present your vehicle at an NSAI authorised plating centre to have it re-plated.

13. If I retrofit an additional axle for the purpose of 46 tonne operation, what requirements must I meet?

Before you can operate at 46 tonnes, your vehicle must, in addition to satisfying the requirements of an "appropriate motor vehicle" satisfy the following additional criteria:

- Since 1st April 2013, triaxle tractor units and triaxle semi-trailers ***already in service*** require Electronic Braking Systems (EBS). **Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS) are not sufficient.**
- ***New triaxle tractor units first registered*** since 1st April 2013 (in addition to requiring EBS) also need Vehicle Stability Function (VSF) which is more commonly known as Electronic Stability Control (ESC). ***Triaxle semi-trailers first licensed*** in Ireland on or after 1st April 2013 (in addition to requiring EBS) also need to have Roll Stability Control (RSC).

¹ Sometimes referred to as 'technically permissible maximum laden mass of combination'.

- You must obtain a completed “46 tonne Declaration of Conformity” (DOC) form which confirms that the vehicle is technically capable and is fitted with the necessary features for operation as part of a 46 tonne combination. A sample of this form is available [here](#).
- This form must be stamped and signed by the original vehicle manufacturer (or his authorised Irish distributor). Only then can a vehicle be plated by an NSAI authorised appointed plating centre for operation at 46 tonnes.

Contact details for the people responsible for issuing such certification at the Irish distributors are available [here](#).

Furthermore, a list of authorised vehicle plating centres can be obtained from the NSAI website (www.n sai.ie) or by contacting them directly on 01 807 3800.

14. Is there a penalty for breach of national vehicle weight limits?

The penalties for breach of the prescribed national weight limits are outlined in detail [here](#)

15. Where can I find an NSAI Authorised Plating Centre?

A list of authorised vehicle plating centres can be obtained from the NSAI website (www.n sai.ie) or by contacting them directly on 01 807 3800.

16. What types of vehicles need to be fitted with an authorisation plate? (i.e. a national weights and dimensions plate)

Goods vehicles (and their trailers) which have a design gross vehicle weight (DGVW) exceeding 3,500 kilograms and passenger vehicles with passenger accommodation for more than eight passengers must be fitted with an authorisation plate (i.e. a national weights and dimensions plate) in the absence of an equivalent manufacturer’s plate. These plates are fitted by National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) appointed plating centres and must contain the information illustrated on pages 14 & 15 of the [HGV Manual](#).

These plates must be displayed at all times when the vehicle is used in a public place.

17. If my vehicle is modified or altered, do I have to change the weights and dimensions plate?

Yes. The plating regulations state that when goods vehicles (and their trailers) with a DGVW exceeding 3,500 kilograms, and passenger vehicles with accommodation for more than eight passengers are used in a public place, the information on their plate must be correct. Therefore if these vehicle types have been modified or altered in any way which would cause any of the information on the plate to be incorrect, this is illegal.

18. What if I’m taking my modified vehicle to a plating centre?

An exception is made for modified vehicles which are being taken to a place where an authorisation plate is to be fitted or changed.

19. What is the penalty for operating a vehicle in a public place without an authorisation plate fitted?

Using vehicle in a public place without an authorisation plate fitted or if it has been modified such that the information displayed on the authorisation plate is inaccurate is a penalty point offence since 8th Dec 2014, i.e. resulting in 3 penalty points and a €60 fine if paid within 28 days rising to €90 if paid within the next 28 days.

Court prosecutions should not take place unless a fixed charge notice has been issued and subsequently not paid. On conviction 5 penalty points and a fine not exceeding €2,500 may be imposed.

20. I had my vehicle re-plated for 44/46 tonne operation but now need some of the data contained on the Vehicle's Registration Certificate (VRC) updated, what should I do?

In some instances it may be necessary to have information on a VRC updated, i.e. where the weights recorded on the VRC do not match with what's on the manufacturer's plate, or in instances where an additional axle has been added to enable 46 tonne operation.

In order for Driver and Vehicle Computer Services Division (DVCS) officials in Shannon to update either 'weights related data'² (or data relating to the number of axles following retrofitting of an additional axle); it will be necessary for them to receive a paper copy of the vehicle's plating record from the NSAI authorised vehicle plating centre.

Following re-plating, plating centre personnel will forward copies of these forms directly to DVCS, who will then amend the vehicle's record on the National Vehicle & Driver File (NVDF) if necessary. If an additional axle has been added, DVCS will then write to the registered owner (copying the relevant Motor Tax Office) noting that the axle particulars have been changed and requesting that the vehicle be reweighed to establish its new combination unladen weight for motor tax purposes.

21. I have retrofitted a third axle to my tractor unit and its unladen weight has increased? Do I need to notify my local Motor Tax office?

Yes. When the vehicle has been re-weighed at an approved weigh bridge, the weigh docket and the original Vehicle Registration Certificate are to be surrendered by the registered owner to the local Motor Tax Office accompanied by a completed [RF111 Form](#). Each Local Authority Motor Tax office has a list of approved weigh bridges in their area.

The local Motor Tax Official will then update the unladen weight details on their system and an updated VRC will issue to the registered owner showing the correct number of axles and the appropriate weights for each.

22. Where can I find more information if I need it?

If you have further queries in relation to the new regulations please contact the RSA on 096 25014 from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday or by email at vehiclestandards@rsa.ie

The contact details for the main HGV distributors in Ireland are available [here](#).

² Entry 'F1' on Permissible Mass (DGWV), Entry 'G' on Mass in Service (Un-laden Mass) & 'N1-N5' on axle weights ,or entry 'L' on number of axles.

For a list of authorised vehicle plating centres, please visit the NSAI website www.nsai.ie or contact them directly on 01 807 3800.

Queries regarding updating data contained on a Vehicle's Registration Certificate (VRC) should be directed to the Driver & Vehicle Computer Services Division (DVCSD) on 061 365000 or Lo-Call 1890 411 412.

Finally the contact details of each Local Authority Motor Tax in the country are available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/MotorTax/>