



Fact Sheet

WYOMING AND SURROUNDING STATES SEMITRAILER LENGTH LIMITS

May 2024

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This fact sheet was prepared for the 2024 Joint Transportation, Highway & Military Affairs Committee's (Committee) interim topic study of maximum semitrailer lengths. The topic was suggested by the sponsors of 2024 HB 218 – Semitrailers-maximum trailer length, which proposed to amend Wyoming statute to increase the maximum allowable length of the lead semitrailer in a truck-tractor double semitrailer/trailer combination from 48 feet to 53 feet.

The fact sheet summarizes semitrailer length limits in Wyoming and the six surrounding states (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Utah). The fact sheet also provides information about the current federal freeze on state regulation of longer combination vehicles, which was enacted in 1991 by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State limits imposed on truck weight, length, width and height are commonly divided into two classifications: "legal limits," which refer to statutory limits that do not require a permit, and "permit limits," which refer to oversize or overweight limits that require a permit. Current Wyoming statutes do not provide for the legal (unpermitted) or permitted operation of a truck-tractor double semitrailer/trailer combination with a lead trailer length of 53 feet.¹ While legal limits in the six surrounding states do not allow operation of a 53-foot lead trailer combination, oversize permit limits in three states (Idaho, Montana, and Utah) do provide for such a combination.

Wyoming is restricted from amending State statute, as proposed by 2024 HB 218, by a federal freeze on state regulation of longer combined vehicles (LCVs). Current federal regulations enacted by the ISTEA require states to enforce state statutes and regulations in effect as of June 1, 1991, regarding truck-tractors pulling two or more trailers or semitrailers on interstate highways and designated federal-aid primary highways. LSO reached out to the Federal Highway

¹ W.S. 31-18-804.

Administration (FHWA) to ask whether (a) under State statutes and regulations frozen by the 1991 ISTEA, Wyoming can issue oversize permits for an LCV double rig with a 53-foot lead trailer, or (b) Wyoming can amend current semitrailer length statutes and regulations frozen by the 1991 ISTEA. LSO is awaiting the FHWA response.

BACKGROUND²

Regulation of truck size and weight is shared by the federal government and states. States began enacting truck weight limits in 1913. By 1929, most states had adopted additional length, width, and height limits. By 1933, all states had enacted some form of truck size and weight regulation.

The first federal truck size and weight limits were enacted in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 as part of the new federal highway program for construction of the Interstate and Defense Highway System. Additional federal regulations were enacted as part of the 1974 Federal-Aid Highway Act Amendments and 1982 Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA). The 1982 STAA expanded federal regulation and authority over vehicle size and weight by establishing minimum and maximum standards for weight and width, and minimum standards for length for vehicles operated on the National Network, which includes interstate highways and designated federal-aid primary highways.

1991 ISTEA Freeze³

In 1991, Congress passed the ISTEA to develop a national intermodal transportation system and authorize funds for highway construction, highway safety, mass transit, and other purposes. This Act established the National Highway System,⁴ consisting of the interstate system and other public roads vital to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility, and provided funding for preventative maintenance of System highways. In addition, the 1991 ISTEA implemented a "freeze" on state regulation of truck-tractors pulling two or more trailers or semitrailers on the interstate System, termed longer combination vehicles (LCVs),⁵ and commercial motor vehicle (CMV) combinations with two or more cargo-carrying units on the National Network. Under the ISTEA freeze, each

² U.S. Department of Transportation, *1997 Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, Volume II, Ch. 1-2 (June 1997); *Legacy of a Landmark: ISTEA After 10 Years*, Public Roads Vol 65, No. 3 (November/December 2001).

³ P.L. 102-240 - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.

⁴ The National Highway System (NHS) differs in extent and purpose from the National Network (NN). The National Network supports interstate commerce by regulating the size of trucks, while the National Highway System supports interstate commerce by focusing federal investments. Both are about the same length, approximately 200,000 miles, but the National Network includes approximately 65,000 miles of highways beyond the NHS, and the National Highway System includes about 50,000 miles of highway not on the NN. Federal Highway Administration, *The National Network* webpage (last accessed May 15, 2024).

⁵ A longer combination vehicle (LCV) is defined as any combination of a truck-tractor and two or more trailers or semitrailers which operates on the Interstate System at a gross vehicle weight greater than 80,000 pounds. 23 CFR 658.5.

state must enforce the LCV and CMV combination length limits authorized by that state’s laws or regulations on or before June 1, 1991.⁶

The 1991 ISTEA freeze is still in effect today, thirty-three years later. Each year, states must certify to the Federal Highway Administrator that the state is enforcing its grandfathered 1991 laws and regulations regarding LCV and CMV combinations.⁷ If a state fails to certify or adequately enforce the grandfathered laws and regulations, the state will be penalized by a reduction in apportioned federal-aid funds.⁸

WYOMING SEMITRAILER LENGTH LIMITS

Legal Limits

Current Wyoming statute, grandfathered under the 1991 ISTEA and codified in federal regulation, establishes the following semitrailer length limits for all highways in the State:

- Truck-tractor + single semitrailer combination: maximum semitrailer length of 60 feet.
- Truck-tractor + double semitrailer/trailer combination: maximum lead semitrailer length of 48 feet; maximum second trailer length of 40 feet; and maximum combined semitrailer/trailer length of 81 ft.⁹

A 2024 Budget Session bill, HB 218 - Semitrailers—maximum trailer length, proposed to increase the statutory lead trailer length from 48 feet to 53 feet. The proposed bill, which failed introduction, would have allowed the operation of a truck-tractor “Rocky Mountain double”¹⁰ combination consisting of a 53-foot lead semitrailer and 28-foot “pup” trailer, for a combined trailer length of 81 feet. See **Appendix A** for 2024 HB 218.

Permit Limits¹¹

Wyoming statutes authorize the issue of various permits for overweight and oversize vehicles, including vehicles hauling forest products, agricultural products, or indivisible loads, such as house trailers or wind turbine blades. The vehicle combinations specified by the oversize permitting statute do not include truck-tractor, double semi-trailer/trailer combinations. According to the Wyoming Department of Transportation, State laws do not allow the permitting of truck-tractor plus double trailer combinations with a 53-foot lead trailer.¹²

⁶ 23 CFR 658.23(a).

⁷ 23 CFR 657.13.

⁸ 23 CFR 657.19.

⁹ W.S. 31-18-802(a)(iv)(B).

¹⁰ A truck-tractor plus double trailer combination that includes a longer lead semitrailer followed by a shorter “pup” trailer is often referred to as a “Rocky Mountain double.”

¹¹ W.S. 31-18-804.

¹² Personal communication with Troy McAlpine, POE Quality Control Analyst, Overweight Loads Supervisor, Wyoming Highway Patrol (May 14, 2024).

See **Appendix B** for Wyoming’s LCV Size and Weight Restrictions frozen under the 1991 ISTEA Act and codified in federal regulation.

SURROUNDING STATE SEMITRAILER LENGTH LIMITS

The six states that border Wyoming (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Utah) each have different legal and permit limits for semitrailer length.

Legal Limits

Most of the six surrounding states have stricter legal limits for single rigs (truck-tractor + semitrailer) and double rigs (truck-tractor + double semitrailer/trailer) than Wyoming. Five states (Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Utah) restrict the maximum length of a single-pulled semitrailer length to 53 feet versus Wyoming’s 60-foot limit.¹³

Only Wyoming and South Dakota set legal limits for the length of individual trailers in a double rig. Wyoming limits the double rig lead trailer length to 48 feet and the second “pup” trailer length to 40 feet, for a maximum combined length of 81 feet.¹⁴ South Dakota limits each double rig trailer length to 45 feet for a maximum combined length of 81.5 feet.¹⁵ The other five surrounding states limit only the combined double trailer length or the overall length of the truck-tractor plus double trailers, which provides more flexibility regarding trailer size combinations.¹⁶

Four of the five surrounding states (Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, and Utah) have more restrictive legal limits for the combined length of double trailers, ranging from 61 feet to 68 feet, compared with Wyoming’s limit of 81 feet.¹⁷ Colorado does not prescribe limits for combined trailer length but instead restricts the overall length of truck-tractor plus double trailer combinations to 70 feet (for unladen truck-tractor pulling two trailers greater than 28.5 feet in length each) or 75 feet (for laden truck-tractors pulling double trailers).¹⁸

Permit Limits

Oversize permit limits for longer combination vehicles (LCVs) pulling double trailers vary among the six surrounding states. Colorado and South Dakota limit permitted LCV individual trailer length to a maximum of 48 feet.¹⁹ Nebraska oversize permit statutes specify permissible oversize

¹³ Idaho Code 49-1010; Mont. Code 61-10-104; Neb. Rev. Stat.60-6,290; S.D. Codified Laws 32-22-8.1; Utah Code 72-7-402; W.S. 31-18-802.

¹⁴ W.S. 31-18-802(a)(iv)(B).

¹⁵ S.D.C.L. 32-22-8.1.

¹⁶ Colorado Rev. Stat. 42-4-504; Idaho Code 49-1010; Mont. Code 61-10-104; Neb. Rev. Stat.60-6,290; Utah Code 72-7-402; W.S. 31-18-802.

¹⁷ Idaho Code 49-1010; Mont. Code 61-10-104; Neb. Rev. Stat.60-6,290; Utah Code 72-7-402; W.S. 31-18-802.

¹⁸ C.R.S. 42-4-504.

¹⁹ C.R.S. 42-4-505; S.D. Admin Code 70:03:01:61.

length limits for LCVs hauling agricultural loads for short distances but do not specify length limits for LCVs carrying other loads.²⁰ However, the Nebraska Office of the Attorney General, Transportation Bureau reports an LCV double trailer combination with a 53-foot lead trailer plus 28-foot pup trailer is not permissible in Nebraska as permits are not issued for combined trailer lengths greater than 65 feet.²¹

By contrast, Idaho, Montana, and Utah LCV permit limits do not restrict individual trailer length but only limit combined trailer lengths or the overall length of the truck-tractor plus trailing units.²² Accordingly, a truck-tractor double trailer combination with a 53-foot lead semitrailer can be permitted in Idaho, Montana, and Utah.

See **Appendix C** for a summary of Wyoming and surrounding state legal and permitted length limits and statutes.

CAN STATES AMEND TRUCK SIZE AND WEIGHT LIMITS FROZEN BY THE 1991 ISTEA?

LSO reached out to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ask whether (a) under State statutes and regulations frozen by the 1991 ISTEA, Wyoming can issue oversize permits for operation of a longer combination vehicle double rig that includes a 53-foot lead trailer, or (b) Wyoming can amend current semitrailer length statutes and regulations frozen by the 1991 ISTEA. The Federal Highway Administration reports the agency's response is currently being reviewed by legal counsel.²³ LSO hopes to receive the response in time for the June 2024 meeting of the Committee.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact LSO Research at 777-7881.

²⁰ R.R.S. Neb. 60-6,298.

²¹ Email from Matt Gaffey, Assistant Attorney General, Nebraska Attorney General's Office, Transportation Bureau (May 28, 2024).

²² Idaho Code 49-1010(7); M.C.A. 61-10-124; Utah Code 72-7-406.

²³ E-mail from Richard Duran, Technical Services Supervisor & Statewide Planner, Federal Highway Administration – Wyoming Division (May 21, 2024).

HOUSE BILL NO. HB0218

Semitrailers-maximum trailer length.

Sponsored by: Representative(s) Allred and Banks and
Senator(s) Dockstader

A BILL

for

1 AN ACT relating to motor vehicles; extending the maximum
2 permissible length for semitrailers; and providing for an
3 effective date.

4

5 *Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Wyoming:*

6

7 **Section 1.** W.S. 31-18-802(a)(iv)(B) is amended to
8 read:

9

10 **31-18-802. General requirements.**

11

12 (a) All vehicles operated on the highways of this
13 state shall comply with the following:

14

1 (iv) Length-all highways, except as provided in
2 31-18-803(a):

3

(B) In a truck-tractor semitrailer combination, no semitrailer shall exceed sixty (60) feet in length. In a truck-tractor, semitrailer, trailer combination or truck-tractor double semitrailer combination, the length of the semitrailer shall not exceed ~~forty-eight (48)~~ fifty-three (53) feet and the length of the trailer or second semitrailer shall not exceed forty (40) feet. The combined length of the semitrailer and trailer or semitrailer shall not exceed eighty-one (81) feet including connecting mechanisms. For any other combination of vehicles the overall length shall not exceed eighty-five (85) feet;

16

17 **Section 2.** This act is effective July 1, 2024.

18

19 (END)

Appendix B.

Wyoming LCV Size and Weight Restrictions frozen under the 1991 federal ISTEA Act and codified in 23CFR 658 Appendix C

STATE: WYOMING

COMBINATION: Truck tractor and 2 trailing units — LCV

LENGTH OF THE CARGO-CARRYING UNITS: 81 feet

MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE GROSS WEIGHT: 117,000 pounds

OPERATIONAL CONDITIONS:

WEIGHT: No single axle shall carry a load in excess of 20,000 pounds. No tandem axle shall carry a load in excess of 36,000 pounds. No triple axle, consisting of three consecutive load-bearing axles that articulate from an attachment to the vehicle including a connecting mechanism to equalize the load between axles having a spacing between the first and third axle of at least 96 inches and not more than 108 inches, shall carry a load in excess of 42,500 pounds. No vehicles operated on the Interstate System shall exceed the maximum weight allowed by application of Federal Bridge Weight Formula B.

No wheel shall carry a load in excess of 10,000 pounds. No tire on a steering axle shall carry a load in excess of 750 pounds per inch of tire width and no other tire on a vehicle shall carry a load in excess of 600 pounds per inch of tire width. "Tire width" means the width stamped on the tire by the manufacturer.

Dummy axles may not be considered in the determination of allowable weights.

DRIVER: The driver must have a commercial driver's license with the appropriate endorsement.

VEHICLE: The lead semitrailer can be up to 48 feet long with the trailing unit up to 40 feet long. In a truck tractor-semitrailer-trailer combination, the heavier towed vehicle shall be directly behind the truck-tractor and the lighter towed vehicle shall be last if the weight difference between consecutive towed vehicles exceeds 5,000 pounds.

PERMITS: No permits required.

ACCESS: Unlimited access off the NN to terminals.

ROUTES: All NN routes.

LEGAL CITATIONS:

WS 31-5-1001, -1002, -1004, -1008, and WS 31-17-1-1 through 31-17-117.

STATE: WYOMING

COMBINATION: Truck-trailer

LENGTH OF THE CARGO-CARRYING UNITS: 78 feet

OPERATIONAL CONDITIONS:

WEIGHT: This combination must operate in compliance with State laws and regulations.

Because it is not an LCV, it is not subject to the ISTEA freeze as it applies to maximum weight.

DRIVER, PERMIT, and ACCESS: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

VEHICLE: No single vehicle shall exceed 60 feet in length within an overall limit of 85 feet.

ROUTES: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

LEGAL CITATIONS:

WS 31-5-1002

STATE: WYOMING

COMBINATION: Automobile/Boat Transporter

LENGTH OF CARGO CARRYING UNITS: 85 feet

OPERATIONAL CONDITIONS:

WEIGHT: This combination must operate in compliance with State laws and regulations.

Because it is not an LCV, it is not subject to the ISTEA freeze as it applies to maximum weight.

DRIVER, PERMIT, and ACCESS: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

VEHICLE: The cargo-carrying length of automobile transporters that carry vehicles on the power unit is the same as the overall length. No single vehicle shall exceed 60 feet in length within an overall limit of 85 feet.

ROUTES: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

LEGAL CITATIONS: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

STATE: WYOMING

COMBINATION: Saddlemount Combination

LENGTH OF CARGO CARRYING UNITS: 85 feet

WEIGHT: This combination must operate in compliance with State laws and regulations.

Because it is not an LCV, it is not subject to the ISTEA freeze as it applies to maximum weight.

DRIVER, PERMIT, and ACCESS: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

VEHICLE: The cargo-carrying length of saddlemount combinations that carry vehicles on the power unit is the same as the overall length. No single vehicle shall exceed 60 feet in length within an overall limit of 85 feet.

No more than three saddlemounts may be used in any combination, except additional vehicles may be transported when safely loaded upon the frame of a vehicle in a properly assembled saddlemount combination.

Towed vehicles in a triple saddlemount combination shall have brakes acting on all wheels which are in contact with the roadway.

All applicable State and Federal rules on coupling devices shall be observed and complied with.

ROUTES: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

LEGAL CITATIONS: Same as the WY-TT2 combination.

[23 CFR PART 658 APPENDIX C](#)

Appendix C. Wyoming and Surrounding States Legal and Permitted Motor Vehicle Length Limits

	Legal (statutory) limits			Oversize permitted limits		
State	Single vehicle max length	Truck-tractor + semitrailer	Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: ¹ Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: Truck-tractor + 3 trailing units	Statute
Wyoming	60 ft	Semitrailer max length 60 ft	Semitrailer max length 48 ft; trailer/second semitrailer max length 40 ft. Max combined semitrailer/trailer length: 81 ft.	W.S. 31-18-804 authorizes the issuance of various oversize permits but WYDOT reports the statute does not allow the issuance of permits to allow a double rig lead trailer length of 53 ft. ² <i>[53 ft lead semitrailer NOT permissible]</i>	Prohibited under W.S. 31-5-1009 and 31-18-804(u).	W.S. 31-18-802 and 31-18-804.
Colorado	Bus: 60 ft School bus: 40 ft. All other: 45 ft.	Laden truck-tractor: 75 ft overall length limit. Unladen truck-tractor where semitrailer > 57'4": overall all length limit 70 ft. Unladen truck-tractor where semitrailer ≤ 57'4": no overall length limit.	Laden truck-tractor: 75 ft overall length limit. Unladen where semitrailer/trailer length > 28'6": overall length limit 70 ft. Unladen where semitrailer/trailer length ≤ 28'6": no overall length limit.	Single trip and annual LCV permits allow the operation on designated highways of: Unladen truck-tractor + semitrailer + trailer of approximate equal lengths ≤ 48 ft; or Unladen truck-tractor + semitrailer ≤ 48 ft + trailer ≤ 28.5 ft. <i>[53 ft. lead semitrailer NOT permissible]</i>	Single trip and annual LCV permits allow the operation on designated highways of: Unladen truck-tractor + semitrailer + 2 trailers, where the 3 cargo units are of approximately equal length ≤ 28.5 ft.	C.R.S. 42-4-504 and 42-4-505

¹ A longer combination vehicle (LCV) is defined as any combination of a truck-tractor and two or more trailers or semitrailers which operates in the Interstate System at a gross vehicle weight greater than 80,000 pounds (23 CFR 658.5).

² Personal communication with Troy McAlpine, POE Quality Control Analyst, Overweight Loads Supervisor, Wyoming Highway Patrol (May 14, 2024).

	Legal (statutory) limits			Oversize permitted limits		
State	Single vehicle max length	Truck-tractor + semitrailer	Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: ¹ Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: Truck-tractor + 3 trailing units	Statute
Idaho	45 ft	National network: Max semitrailer length: 53 ft. All other highways: Max trailer/ semitrailer length: 48 ft. Max overall length: 75 ft. Narrow, curvy, or high traffic routes: max overall length: 65 ft.	National network: Max. double semitrailer/trailer length: 68 ft. All other highways: Max double semitrailer/trailer length: 61 ft. Max tractor + double semitrailer/trailer overall length: 75 ft.	Permit allows operation on designated routes of: Max combined trailer length: 95 ft. Overall length limit: 115 ft. <i>[53 ft lead semitrailer permissible]</i>	Permit allow operation on designated routes of: Max. combined trailer length: 95 ft. Overall length limit: 115 ft.	Idaho Code 49-1010
Montana	55 ft	Max semitrailer length: 53 ft.	Max semitrailer/trailer length: 28.5 ft each or 61 ft combined	Annual permits for: Rocky Mountain double³: combined trailer length < 81 ft and overall length ≤ 95 ft. Interstate-only double: combined trailer length > 81 ft and overall length 95 – 100 ft. <i>[53 ft lead semitrailer permissible]</i>	Special permit allows operation on interstate highways only. Cab-over truck-tractor: overall length ≤ 105 ft; conventional truck-tractor: overall length ≤ 110 ft.	MCA 61-10-104 and 61-10-124.

³ Montana statute defines a “Rocky Mountain double” as a combination of vehicles that includes a truck-tractor pulling a long semitrailer and a shorter trailer. MCA 61-10-104(6)(e).

	Legal (statutory) limits			Oversize permitted limits		
State	Single vehicle max length	Truck-tractor + semitrailer	Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: Truck-tractor + 3 trailing units	Statute
Nebraska	Bus, motor home, or truck: 45 ft. All other: 40 ft.	Max. semitrailer length: 53 ft. Exception: Max. length of semitrailer transporting baled livestock forage: 59’ 6”. Max. overall length of semitrailer + trailer combination: 65 ft. Exception: Max overall length of truck + trailer transporting harvesting implements: 75 ft.	Max. semitrailer + trailer length: 65 ft. Exception: Custom harvesters, April – November: 81’ 6”.	Special, continuing, or continuous oversize permits may be issued when necessary to further the national defense or the general welfare, to permit movement of cost-saving equipment to be used in highway or other public construction or in agricultural land treatment, or because of an emergency, unusual circumstance, or very special situation. <i>[53 ft lead semitrailer NOT permissible]</i> ⁴		R.R.S. Neb. 60-6,290 (eff. 7/19/2024) and 60-6,298.
South Dakota	45 ft.	Max. semitrailer length: 53 ft. Max. overall length: 80 ft.	Semitrailer+ semitrailer/trailer: Max unit length 45 ft.; max. combined unit length: 81 ft. 6 in. Double trailers: Max. trailer length: 28.5 ft; max combined trailer length with: 80 ft.	S.D.C.L. 32-22-42 authorizes the S.D. Transportation Commission to promulgate rules for issuing oversize and overweight permits. Current Rules allow for the sale of self-issuing permits for overlength or overweight LCV double trailer combinations, with a max overall length of 110 ft. and max individual trailer length of 48 ft. Permitted LCVs may travel on interstate and designated federal and state highways. <i>[53 ft lead semitrailer NOT permissible]</i>	S.D.C.L. 32-22-42.14 authorizes the S.D. Transportation Commission to promulgate rules for issuing triple trailer single trip permits. Current Rules allow for the sale of self-issuing permits for overlength or overweight LCV triple trailer combinations with a max overall length of 110 ft. and max individual trailer length of 28.5 ft. Permitted LCVs may travel on interstate and designated federal and state highways.	S.D.C.L. 32-22-5 through 32-22-10. ARSD 70:03:01:60 – 70:03:01:65.

⁴ Email from Matt Gaffey, Assistant Attorney General, Nebraska Attorney General’s Office, Transportation Bureau (May 28, 2024).

	Legal (statutory) limits			Oversize permitted limits		
State	Single vehicle max length	Truck-tractor + semitrailer	Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: Truck-tractor + 2 trailing units	LCV: Truck-tractor + 3 trailing units	Statute
Utah	45 feet	Max semitrailer length: 53 ft.	Max. overall length of two coupled trailers: 61 ft.	Oversize permits allow double trailers with: Cargo carrying length up to 81 ft (single trip, semiannual or annual permits) Cargo carrying length 81 ft. – 95 ft (annual permits) <i>[53 ft lead semitrailer permittable]</i>	Oversize permits allow triple trailers with : Cargo carrying length up to 95 ft	Utah Code 72-7-402 and 72-7-406.