Bridge Load Posting Program
General Fact Sheet

A posted bridge is safe to use, but the weight of certain vehicles must be limited accordingly.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has begun placing new load posting or "Weight Limit" signs at bridges around the state as mandated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Bridge load posting is a matter of public safety and will help MDT safeguard vital transportation infrastructure.

In the last decade, manufacturers have developed specialized hauling vehicles (SHVs) that are capable of legally carrying heavy, concentrated loads. These vehicles have been found to overstress bridges more than typical vehicles of the past.

To account for their increasing presence and ensure safe operation, FHWA now requires all states to consider them when determining if a load posting is necessary. As a result, motorists will start to notice new weight limits and signs on some bridges.

Weight restriction signs for bridges are in place to keep motorists safe and to maintain the integrity of the structure. A vehicle that exceeds posted weight limits could damage a bridge or cause it to fail, leading to serious injury or fatalities. Per Montana law, it is illegal for an overweight vehicle to cross a bridge, and doing so could result in significant fines.

Vehicle Types

Weight limit signs cannot show every possible vehicle on the road, so three standard silhouettes are used to communicate maximum gross vehicle weight (GVW) for common vehicle types. Some operators mistakenly try to count axles on the silhouettes to determine which one applies to them; axles are shown for example only.



Truck

The first silhouette represents a single-unit vehicle designed to carry a load, regardless of the number of tires, axles or axle configuration.



Tractor + Trailer

The second silhouette represents a two-unit vehicle, which is any combination of tractor and trailer that can be easily separated. These vehicles are sometimes referred to as semi-trucks.



Truck + Trailer Combination

The third silhouette represents a two-unit or three-unit vehicle with two cargo areas. These may include tractor-trailer-trailer or truck-trailer combinations.











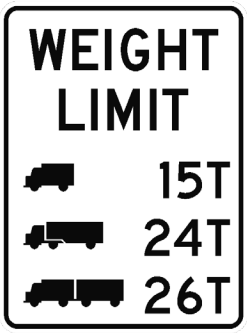
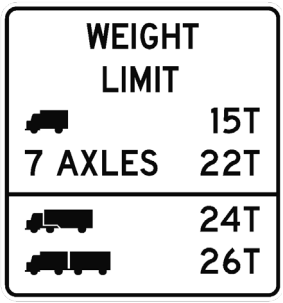








Typical Weight-Restriction Signs

Sign	Application
	**Single Limit Sign** **Applies to** all vehicles, such as: cars, trucks, agricultural vehicles **Maximum GVW** is limited regardless of number of axles or axle configuration, includes any attached trailers
	**Single Silhouette Sign** **Applies to** single-unit vehicles only, such as: straight trucks, box trucks, moving trucks, dump and concrete trucks, buses, etc. **Maximum GVW** is based on the single-unit vehicle's number of axles Number of axles shown on the sign may vary from bridge to bridge **Example Sign** (*shown left*): • Single-unit vehicles with 2-4 axles* – not restricted • Single-unit vehicles with 5-7 axles* – 27T max GVW • Combination Vehicles – not restricted**
 	**Three Silhouette Sign** **Applies to** single-unit and combination vehicles, such as: box trucks, moving trucks, dump and concrete trucks, buses, tractor-trailers, semitrailers, flatbed trucks with trailers, etc. **Maximum GVW** is based on vehicle type*** There are multiple variations of this sign with different lines of text and axle groupings for single-unit vehicles **Example Sign** (*shown top left*): • All single-unit vehicles (regardless of axle number) – 15T max GVW • Tractor + Trailer (regardless of axle number) – 24T max GVW • Truck + Trailer Combination (regardless of axle number) – 26T max GVW **Example Sign** (*shown bottom left*): • Single-unit vehicles with 2-6 axles* – 15T max GVW • Single-unit vehicles with 7 axles* – 22T max GVW • Tractor + Trailer (regardless of axle number) – 24T max GVW • Truck + Trailer Combination (regardless of axle number) – 26T max GVW

* Lift axle configurations apply only if the axle is lowered. For example, a truck with four lowered axles and two raised axles must abide by the weight restrictions for four-axle trucks.

** To protect bridge infrastructure, SHV-type power units of combination vehicles should not exceed single silhouette sign limitations.

*** The silhouette represents a type of vehicle, regardless of its number or axles.

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MONTANA
Department of Transportation

For more information

Interactive maps are posted on the program's webpage where you are able to look up individual bridges and their corresponding posting. For more information, visit MDT's Bridge Load Posting Program webpage at bit.ly/bridgeload.

Scan to learn more