



Highway Maintenance Manual
Chapter 06 Winter Maintenance
Section 05 Road Classifications
Subject 05 Frozen Road Declaration

Bureau of Highway Maintenance
March 2012

1.0 Authority

Under Wis. Stats. Section 348.175, when the department determines that the state highways are frozen to the extent that no damage to them may result by the transportation of peeled or unpeeled forest products cut crosswise (excluding woodchips) or abrasives or salt for highway winter maintenance in excess of the limitations under Wis. Stats. Section, 348.15, the Department shall declare that particular highways or highways within areas of the state are eligible for increased weight limitations.

It is the responsibility of the officers or agencies in charge of maintenance of highways to make such a declaration, according to Wis. Stats. Section, 348.175. The Bureau of Highway Maintenance can make this declaration only with regard to the state maintained highway system. The Frozen Road Declaration for county or local roads must be made by the local agency having maintenance authority of those roadways.

2.0 Frozen Road Declaration

To comply with Wis. Stats. Section 348.175 as amended, the department shall make the following declaration. (When it is implemented statewide):

Pursuant to Section 348.175, Wisconsin Statutes, the Department of Transportation declares that all highways of the state maintained highway system only are eligible for increased weight limitations from December XX, 20YY until March ZZ, 20YY. The declaration may be revoked earlier or later when conditions warrant. All state trunk highways are included, except the national system of interstate and defense highways (NOTE: I-39 from Wausau to the I-90/94 interchange near Portage is a part of this declaration and subject to the 98,000 pounds gross weight) and any state maintained highways where special weight restrictions have been imposed.

Eligibility for increased weight limitations is restricted to vehicles hauling peeled or unpeeled forest products cut crosswise (excluding wood chips) or abrasives or salt for highway winter maintenance. For legally licensed vehicles hauling these loads, no special permit is required during this period.

The gross weight imposed on the highway by the wheels of any one axle shall not exceed 23,000 pounds, or for two axles less than seven feet apart, 38,000 pounds, or for groups of three consecutive axles not less than nine (9) feet or more than thirteen (13) feet apart, a weight of 12,000 pounds more than permitted in Section 348.15(3)(c), Stats. This 12,000 pounds includes the 4,000 pounds provided for in Section 348.15(3)(br), Stats.

The gross weight imposed on the highway by all axles of a vehicle or combination of vehicles shall not exceed 98,000 pounds.

* Footnote: On the first day that conditions warrant their determination of such frozen condition and freedom of damage to such highways by transportation, the officers or agencies in charge of maintenance of highways shall declare particular highway zones within areas of the state, as eligible for increased weight limitations, and each declaration shall be effective as of 12:01 a.m. on the 2nd day following the declaration.

When it is deemed to be appropriate, the starting and ending dates of the Frozen Road Declaration may be staggered by zones depending on local road conditions. A map showing the zones is available at the Department's Internet web site. (<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/truck/docs/whenisitfrozen.pdf>)

3.0 Procedure

1. By mid to late December to early January of each year, the Bureau of Highway Maintenance shall post the Frozen Road Declaration on the department's internet web site on the day that the roads are considered frozen or in thaw within each zone.

2. If at any time that the Frozen Road Declaration is in effect, the department determines that the period should be ended, extended or reduced, official notice of the change should be published, on the day that the roads are considered frozen or in thaw within each zone, at the Department's internet web site.
3. The Frozen Road Declaration typically ends March 1st – 8th of each year.

4.0 Distribution of the Frozen Road Declaration

The following should be notified by the Division of Transportation System Development, Bureau of Highway Maintenance of the declaration on an annual basis:

1. Division Administrator
2. Division Director-Statewide Bureaus
3. Division Operations Director - Regions
4. County Highway Commissioners
5. Department Office of Public Affairs
6. Bureau of Traffic Operations.
7. Division of Motor Vehicles - Motor Carrier Services Section
8. Division of State Patrol
9. Timber Producers Association of Michigan and Wisconsin (T.P.A.)
10. Wisconsin Professional Loggers Association
11. Forest Industry Safety Training Alliance (F.I.S.T.A.)
12. Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association
13. Individual freight organizations as appropriate

A copy of the declaration shall be posted on the department's Internet site at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/truck/frozenroad.htm>

A recorded message concerning the status of the declaration shall be available at a Bureau of Highway Maintenance telephone number. (608) 266-8417.