

Virginia Title 46.2 — MOTOR VEHICLES

§ 46.2-100. Definitions.

As used in this title, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Semitrailer" means every vehicle of the trailer type so designed and used in conjunction with a motor vehicle that some part of its own weight and that of its own load rests on or is carried by another vehicle.

"Stinger-steered automobile or watercraft transporter" means an automobile or watercraft transporter configured as a semitrailer combination wherein the fifth wheel is located on a drop frame behind and below the rearmost axle of the power unit.

"Trailer" means every vehicle without motive power designed for carrying property or passengers wholly on its own structure and for being drawn by a motor vehicle, including manufactured homes.

§ 46.2-1103. Greater size, weight, and load limits permitted by interstate commerce regulations.

If a federal regulation of interstate commerce permits the use in interstate commerce over the highways of Virginia or any of them, of a greater size, weight, or load limit than prescribed in this title, the Board shall prescribe a similar size, weight, and load limit for vehicles in intrastate commerce operated over the same highways.

§ 46.2-1105. Width of vehicles generally; exceptions.

A. No vehicle, including any load thereon, but excluding the mirror required by § [46.2-1082](#) and any warning device installed on a school bus pursuant to § [46.2-1090](#), shall exceed a total outside width as follows:

1. Passenger bus operated in an incorporated city or town when authorized under § [46.2-1300](#) -- 102 inches;
2. School buses -- 100 inches;
3. Vehicles hauling boats or other watercraft -- 102 inches;
4. Other vehicles -- 102 inches.

B. Notwithstanding subsection A, a travel trailer as defined in § [46.2-1500](#) or a motor home may exceed 102 inches if such excess width is attributable to an appurtenance that extends no more than six inches beyond the body of the vehicle. For the purposes of this subsection, "appurtenance" includes (i) an awning and its support hardware and (ii) any appendage that is installed by the manufacturer or dealer intended to be an integral part of a motor home or travel trailer, but does not include any item that is temporarily attached to the exterior of the vehicle by the vehicle's owner for the purposes of transporting the item from one location to another.

§ 46.2-1109. Widths of commercial vehicles.

No commercial vehicle shall exceed 102 inches in width when operating on any interstate highway or on any highway designated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The width limitation in this section shall not include rear view mirrors, turn signal lights, handholds for cab entry and egress, splash suppressant devices, and load-induced tire bulge. Safety devices, with the exception of rear view mirrors, shall not extend more than three inches on each side of a vehicle. The Commissioner of Highways shall designate reasonable access to terminals, facilities for food, fuel, repairs, and rest. Household goods carriers and any tractor truck semitrailer combination in which the semitrailer has a length of no more than twenty-eight and one-half feet shall not be denied reasonable access to points of loading and unloading, except as designated, based on safety considerations, by the Commissioner of Highways. No reasonable access designation shall be made, however, until notice of any proposed designation has been provided by the Commissioner of Highways to the governing body of every locality wherein any highway affected by the proposed designation is located.

For the purposes of this section, a commercial vehicle is defined as a loaded or empty motor vehicle, trailer, or semitrailer designed or regularly used for carrying freight, merchandise, or more than ten passengers, including buses, but not including vehicles used for vanpools.

§ 46.2-1110. Height of vehicles; damage to overhead obstruction; penalty.

No loaded or unloaded vehicle shall exceed a height of 13 feet, six inches.

Nothing contained in this section shall require either the public authorities or railroad companies to provide vertical clearances of overhead bridges or structures in excess of 12 feet, six inches, or to make any changes in the vertical clearances of existing overhead bridges or structures crossing highways. The driver or owner of vehicles on highways shall be held financially responsible for any damage to overhead bridges or structures that results from collisions therewith.

The driver or owner of any vehicle colliding with an overhead bridge or structure shall immediately notify, either in person or by telephone, a law-enforcement officer or the public authority or railroad company, owning or maintaining such overhead bridge or structure of the fact of such collision, and his name, address, driver's license number, and the registration number of his vehicle. Failure to give such notice immediately, either in person or by telephone, shall constitute a Class 1 misdemeanor.

On any highway maintained by the Department of Transportation over which there is a bridge or structure having a vertical clearance of less than 14 feet, the Commissioner of Highways shall have at least two signs erected setting forth the height of the bridge or structure. Such signs shall be located at least 1,500 feet ahead of the bridge or structure.

On any highway maintained by a county, city, or town over which a bridge or structure has a vertical clearance of less than 14 feet, the local governing body shall have at least two signs erected setting forth the height of the bridge or structure. Such signs shall be located at least 1,500 feet ahead of the bridge or structure.

The Department of Transportation may install and use overheight vehicle optical detection systems to identify vehicles that exceed the overhead clearance of the westbound tunnel of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel on Interstate 64. When the optical system sensor located closest to the westbound tunnel entrance is used in identifying such vehicles, the system shall be installed at the specified height as determined by measurement standards that have been certified by the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and are traceable to national standards of measurement. Such identification by such system shall, for all purposes of law, be equivalent to having measured the height of the vehicle with a tape measure or other measuring device. When an employee of the Department of Transportation or the Department of State Police identifies a vehicle whose height exceeds 13 feet, six inches and whose driver is driving or attempting to drive through the westbound tunnel of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel on Interstate 64, the driver of such vehicle may elect to wait until the end of peak traffic periods, as determined by the Department of Transportation, so that the Department of Transportation or Department of State Police may safely stop traffic and allow such vehicle to proceed in the opposite direction. If the driver does not elect to wait, he shall be subject to the penalties under this section.

Any person who drives or attempts to drive any vehicle or combination of vehicles into or through any tunnel when the height of such vehicle, any vehicle in a combination of vehicles, or any load on any such vehicle exceeds that permitted for such tunnel, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, in addition, shall be assessed three driver demerit points. In addition, the driver of any such vehicle shall be fined \$1,000, of which \$1,000 shall be a mandatory minimum. For subsequent offenses, the owner of any such vehicle shall be fined \$2,500, of which \$2,500 shall be a mandatory minimum.

A violation of this section shall be deemed for all purposes a moving violation.

§ 46.2-1112. Length of vehicles, generally; special permits; tractor truck semitrailer combinations, etc., operating on certain highways; penalty.

Except for buses and motor homes, no motor vehicle longer than 40 feet shall be operated on any highway in the Commonwealth. The actual length of any combination of vehicles coupled together including any load thereon shall not exceed a total of 65 feet. However, the length of a tractor truck semitrailer combination may exceed 65 feet in length, provided the semitrailer does not exceed 53 feet in length and the distance between the kingpin of the semitrailer and the rearmost axle or a point midway between the rear tandem axles does not exceed 41 feet. The Commissioner of Highways may impose restrictions on the operation of vehicles exceeding 65 feet in length on certain roads, based on a safety and engineering analysis. No bus or motor home longer than 45 feet shall be operated on any highway in the Commonwealth. No tolerance shall be allowed that exceeds 12 inches.

The Commissioner, however, when good cause is shown, may issue a special permit for combinations either in excess of 65 feet, including any load thereon, or where the object or objects to be carried cannot be moved otherwise. Such permits may also be issued by the Department when the total number of otherwise overdimensional loads of modular housing of no

more than two units may be reduced by permitting the use of an overlength trailer not exceeding 54 feet. No permit shall be issued by the Commissioner until an engineering analysis of a proposed routing has been conducted by the Commissioner of Highways to assess the ability of the roadway to be traversed to sustain the vehicle's size.

No overall length restrictions, however, shall be imposed on any tractor truck semitrailer combinations drawing one trailer or any tractor truck semitrailer combinations when operated on any interstate highway or on any highway as designated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. No such designation shall be made, however, until notice of any proposed designation has been provided by the Commissioner of Highways to the governing body of every locality wherein any highway affected by the proposed designation is located.

No individual semitrailer or trailer being drawn in a tractor truck semitrailer trailer combination, however, shall exceed 28 1/2 feet in length, and no semitrailer being operated in a tractor truck semitrailer combination shall exceed 48 feet in length, except when semitrailers have a distance of not more than 41 feet between the kingpin of the semitrailer and the rearmost axle or a point midway between the rear tandem axles, such semitrailer shall be allowed not more than 53 feet in length.

The length limitations on semitrailers and trailers in the foregoing provisions of this section shall be exclusive of safety and energy conservation devices, steps and handholds for entry and egress, rubber dock guards, flexible fender extensions, mudflaps, refrigeration units, and air compressors. The Commissioner of Highways shall designate reasonable access to terminals, facilities for food, fuel, repairs and rest. Household goods carriers and any tractor truck semitrailer combination in which the semitrailer has a length of no more than 28 1/2 feet shall not be denied reasonable access to points of loading and unloading, except as designated, based on safety considerations, by the Commissioner of Highways.

Any person operating a vehicle whose length is not in conformity with the provisions of this chapter on a two-lane highway where passing is permitted shall be guilty of a traffic infraction and fined \$250.

§ 46.2-1114. Length of automobile or watercraft transporters; operation on certain highways.

Automobile or watercraft transporters shall not exceed a length of 65 feet when operated on any interstate highway or on any highway as designated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Stinger-steered automobile or watercraft transporters shall not exceed a length of 75 feet when operated on any interstate highway or on any highway designated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. In addition, watercraft may be transported on a truck/trailer combination no more than 65 feet long when operated on any interstate highway or on any highway designated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Any such vehicle shall display a sign of a size and type approved by the Commissioner of Highways warning that the vehicle is an overlength vehicle. However, an additional three-foot overhang shall be allowed beyond the front and a four-foot overhang shall be allowed beyond the rear of the vehicle. Such combinations shall

have reasonable access to terminals, facilities for food, fuel, repairs, and rest as designated by the Commissioner of Highways.

§ 46.2-1070. Brakes on trailers

Every semitrailer, **trailer**, or separate vehicle attached by a drawbar, chain, or coupling to a towing vehicle other than a farm tractor or a vehicle not required to obtain a registration certificate and having an actual gross weight of 3,000 pounds or more, shall be equipped with **brakes** controlled or operated by the driver of the towing vehicle, which shall conform to the specifications set forth in [§ 46.2-1067](#) and shall be of a type approved by the Superintendent. Farm **trailers** used exclusively for hauling raw agricultural produce from farm to farm or farm to packing shed or processing plant within the normal growing area of the packing shed or processing plant and **trailers** or semitrailers drawn by a properly licensed motor vehicle but exempt from registration, shall be exempt from the requirements of this section.

"Gross weight" for the purpose of this section includes weight of the vehicle and the load upon such semitrailer, **trailer**, or separate vehicle.

This section shall not apply to any vehicle being towed for repairs, repossession, in an emergency, or being moved by a tow truck when two wheels of the towed vehicle are off the ground.

§ 46.2-1118. Connection between vehicles; tow trucks towing vehicles by means of a wheel lift apparatus

The connection between any two vehicles, one of which is towing or drawing the other on a highway, shall consist of a fifth wheel, drawbar, **trailer hitch**, or other similar device not to exceed 15 feet in length from one vehicle to the other. Any such two vehicles shall, in addition to such drawbar or other similar device, be equipped at all times when so operated on the highway with an emergency chain or cable that is structurally adequate to securely stop and hold the **trailer** being towed.

The fifth wheel, drawbar, **trailer hitch**, or similar device must (i) be structurally adequate for the weight being drawn, (ii) be properly and securely mounted, (iii) provide for adequate articulation at the connection without excessive slack at that location, and (iv) be provided with a locking device that prevents accidental separation of the towed and towing vehicles. The mounting of the fifth wheel, drawbar, **trailer hitch**, or similar device on the towing vehicle must include reinforcement or bracing of the frame sufficient to produce strength and rigidity of the frame to prevent its undue distortion.

The foregoing provisions of this section shall not apply to (i) any farm tractor, as defined in [§ 46.2-100](#), when such farm tractor is towing any farm implement or farm machinery by means of a drawbar coupled with a safety **hitch** pin or manufacturer's coupling device or (ii) any tow truck towing a vehicle by means of a wheel lift apparatus that employs a safety strap to hold two of the

towed vehicle's wheels within a wheel lift cradle in a manner consistent with instructions of the manufacturer of such wheel lift apparatus.

For the purposes of this section, "tow truck" means any motor vehicle that is constructed and used primarily for towing, lifting, or otherwise moving illegally parked or disabled vehicles.

§ 46.2-1013. Tail **lights**

Every motor vehicle and every **trailer** or semitrailer being drawn at the end of one or more other vehicles shall carry at the rear two red **lights** plainly visible in clear weather from a distance of 500 feet to the rear of such vehicle. Such tail **lights** shall be constructed and so mounted in their relation to the rear license plate as to illuminate the license plate with a white **light** so that the same may be read from a distance of 50 feet to the rear of such vehicle. Alternatively, a separate white **light** shall be so mounted as to illuminate the rear license plate from a distance of 50 feet to the rear of such vehicle. Any such tail **lights** or special white **light** shall be of a type approved by the Superintendent.

In any instance where the tail **light** is to be installed on a boat **trailer** and the boat extends beyond the end of the **trailer** or to the end of the **trailer**, an approved portable **light** assembly or assemblies may be attached to the exposed rear of the boat, provided such installation complies with the visibility requirements of this section. The provisions of this section shall not apply to motorcycles.

§ 46.2-1082. **Mirrors**

No person shall drive a motor vehicle on a highway in the Commonwealth if the vehicle is not equipped with a **mirror** which reflects to the driver a view of the highway for a distance of not less than 200 feet to the rear of such vehicle.

No motor vehicle registered in the Commonwealth, designed and licensed primarily for passenger vehicular transportation on the public highways and manufactured after 1968 shall be driven on the highways in the Commonwealth unless equipped with at least one outside and at least one inside rear view **mirror** meeting the requirements of this section.

Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, no motor vehicle which either has no rear window, or which has a rear window so obstructed as to prevent rearward vision by means of an inside rear view **mirror**, shall be required to be equipped with an inside rear view **mirror** if such motor vehicle has horizontally and vertically adjustable outside rear view **mirrors** installed on both sides of such motor vehicle in such a manner as to provide the driver of such motor vehicle a rearward view along both sides of such motor vehicle for at least 200 feet.

