



SUBJECT: Limited hitch offset exemption for flatbed tow trucks towing motor vehicles

Table with 3 columns: Managers, Victoria; Regional CVSE Managers; Area Vehicle Inspectors; Deputy Director, CVSE; ADM, Highways Department; Passenger Transportation Board; Trucking Industry; Carrier Safety Inspectors; Government Agents; Law Enforcement Agencies; Commercial Transport Insp. (Inspection Stations); ICBC

PURPOSE OF CIRCULAR

To advise the tow truck industry and enforcement staff of a limited hitch offset exemption for flatbed style tow trucks1 towing motor vehicles. Hitch offset is the measurement from the centre of the drive axle group on the truck to the articulation point of the hitch. Appendix B of the Commercial Transport Regulations requires that maximum hitch offset on a single or tandem (2) drive axle truck is 1.8 m, and maximum hitch offset on a tridem (3) drive axle truck is 2.6 m. The following conditions apply to this exemption:

- 1. The regulation hitch offset may be exceeded only to the extent necessary to utilize a wheel lift to tow a motor vehicle, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Flatbed tow truck with wheel lift towing a motor vehicle

- 2. No manufacturer’s weight ratings may be exceeded, on the wheel lift or on the tow truck.

1 For the purposes of this circular, “tow truck” refers to a “tow car” within the meaning of the Motor Vehicle Act, and specifically a full size commercial truck as defined in the Commercial Transport Regulations operating as a tow car.

3. The gross vehicle weight rating of the vehicle being towed may not exceed 6,000 kg or the manufacturer's rating for the wheel lift, whichever is lower.
4. The exemption applies only when towing a motor vehicle. If the tow truck is used to draw any other type of vehicle (e.g. a trailer, a mobile home or office, etc.), the hitch offset must be compliant with [Appendix B](#) of the Commercial Transport Regulations.

BACKGROUND

It has come to our attention that some portion of the flatbed tow truck fleet in the province is non-compliant with regulations governing maximum hitch offset, when using standard wheel lift equipment.

After investigating practices in other Canadian jurisdictions, a decision has been taken to allow the limited exemption.

The Ministry will allow this exemption by general authority delegated to the Director CVSE in Section 7.02(1) of the Commercial Transport Regulations. No permits are required for the hitch offset exemption, although other permit requirements for tow vehicles will continue to apply.

See section 5.3.14, [Chapter 5](#), of the Commercial Transport Procedures Manual for permit and other operational guidance for tow trucks.

Note that smaller tow trucks, with a gross vehicle weight rating under 6,000 kg, are not subject to the dimensional limits of the Commercial Transport Regulations except for sections 7.05, 7.06 and 7.08(6) – for overall height, width and length respectively – and are therefore not subject to the hitch offset limit.

Questions about the new exemption may be directed to commercial.transport@gov.bc.ca or to Jan Lansing, Manager Commercial Transport, at jan.lansing@gov.bc.ca.



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