

## **SECTION 17. WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON COUNTY ROADS AND BRIDGES**

In the interest of preserving the integrity of a County road or bridge and pursuant to Sections 7-14-21 and 7-14-22 MCA, the Commissioners authorize the County to post appropriate temporary or permanent weight restrictions on any road or bridge under the County's jurisdiction. Enforcement of these restrictions is conducted by the Missoula County Sheriff's Department and the Montana Department of Transportation – Motor Carrier Services Division with penalties as prescribed in Sections 61-10-141 through 61-10-147 MCA.

It is important for the trucking industry and suppliers of goods and products to comply with load restrictions. The trucking industry should also give positive instruction to their drivers relative to the load limits. Solicitation is made to all suppliers of goods and products to do the same. If compliance with less restrictive limits is not found, more restrictive limits may be imposed.

County personnel will observe truck movement on restricted routes or bridges and report any violations of either speed or load limitations to proper authorities. Excessive violations may lead to the implementation of more restrictive limits.

### **17.1 Road Restrictions**

Seasonal load restrictions are often necessary to prevent extensive surface damage to paved or gravel roads. When snow, ice and frozen ground thaw in late winter and early spring, some road beds and base gravel become saturated and their ability to carry truck loads is reduced. The potential for severe distress during the freeze-thaw cycles is high, and older roadways are even more susceptible to frost action than roads constructed to today's standards. To protect Missoula County's investment and to keep roads serviceable for the public, load restrictions must be placed on vulnerable roads.

The County will place load restrictions for single axle and tandem axle weights based upon pounds per inch width of tire limits on roads vulnerable to distress. The County will make a conscientious effort to place load restrictions only when necessary and lift the limits as soon as possible. Hay grinders and their towing units are exempt from the restrictions of this policy.

In the order of severity, the following types of restrictions to be imposed on County roads are:

1. Where the road surfaces for the entire route are adequate to carry legal loads, the County may place a reduced speed limit on those sections that show distress. If this limitation does not prevent further distress or damage, then more restrictive limitations may be imposed.
2. Where the road surface is susceptible to damage from heavy loads, load limits will be imposed for the entire section of road. The limitation will be eight (8) tons single axle and sixteen (16) ton tandem axle (400 pounds per inch width of tire) and a reduced speed limit may be placed through distressed areas. If the road continues to show signs of uncontrollable distress under this limitation, the County will impose lower or more restrictive limits.

3. Where the County determines the road surface is particularly susceptible to extensive damage from heavy loads, or where surface damage cannot be controlled by less restrictive limits, then the limitation will be seven (7) tons single axle and fourteen (14) tons tandem axle (350 pounds per inch width of tire) and a reduced speed limit may be placed through distressed areas.
4. The County recognizes the need for essential services, such as the supply of propane or heating oil and the pick-up of solid waste. Overweight permits with identified restrictions may be issued to these service providers by Missoula County that will allow service to continue.

## **17.2 Bridge Restrictions**

Permanent load restrictions may be necessary for County bridges that are not capable of carrying legal highway loads, whether as a result of older design criteria or structural member deterioration. Bridges with a span greater than twenty (20) feet are inspected by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Bridge Inventory (NBI) regulations. If structural deficiencies are discovered during those inspections, or if requested at any other time by the County, MDT may analyze the structure to determine if a weight restriction is necessary. For all other structures in the county, bi-annual inspections are conducted by County personnel and capacity analysis may be conducted by the County or by private consultants.

If it is determined that a posted weight restriction is necessary, the County will post the restriction at the Inventory Rating. The Inventory Rating is the limit at which repeated loads may safely cross the structure without causing damage. The Operating Rating is the limit where larger loads may cross the structure at very infrequent intervals without causing damage and is the governing factor for the issuance of overweight permits as related to County bridges.