

**A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE LAW  
ON THE ROAD USE OF  
ABNORMAL LOAD CARRIERS ON MOBILE ENGINEERING PLANT**

**INTRODUCTION**

- 1 The C & U Regulations\* are the basic rules which govern the way in which all motor vehicles and trailers are built and operated. It is illegal to operate one which does not comply.
- 2 But some just cannot comply because they are built to do special jobs. The STGO\*\* gives dispensation from some regulations - mainly those dealing with weight and size limits - to specific kinds of vehicles on condition that special rules are obeyed, aimed at reducing traffic congestion and safeguarding bridges, etc.

**THIS GUIDE**

- 3 Sets out the main requirements of the STGO about abnormal load carriers and mobile engineering plant. It is a guide only and not an authoritative interpretation of the law.

**ABNORMAL INDIVISIBLE LOAD CARRIERS**

**INDIVISIBLE LOADS**

- 4 The C & U regulations allow the carriage of "indivisible loads", ie pieces up to 4.3m (14' 1½") wide or 27.4m (89' 11") long which cannot be divided further for road transport. All regulations must be complied with (including weight limits) and all police forces along the route given details at least two clear days in advance.

**ABNORMAL INDIVISIBLE LOADS**

- 5 The STGO allows the carriage of abnormal indivisible loads (defined in Article 3) which are single pieces which cannot be divided further for road transport and are too wide and/or heavy to comply with the C & U Regulations. These loads can only be carried on purpose built vehicles and special rules ("Conditions") must be complied with. The road use rules are in Article 18. A load which is abnormal only because it is wider than 4.3m (14' 1½") can be carried on an ordinary vehicle (Article 20).

Usually            -            only one abnormal indivisible load can be carried at one time  
                         -            no other items can be carried in addition to an abnormal indivisible load

BUT both can be done in certain circumstances - see Article 18.

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\* The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986, as amended.

\*\* The Motor Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) General Order 2003.

Both are obtainable from H M Stationery Office or through booksellers.

## CONDITIONS

6 If you want to carry an abnormal indivisible load, the outfit, whether laden or unladen, must comply with some of the C & U Regulations and depending on its size and weight, with special conditions. These are:-

a SPECIAL SPEED LIMIT (Article 21)

| Vehicle Category | Motorway | Dual Carriageways | Other Roads |
|------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Category 1    | 60mph    | 50mph             | 40mph       |
| 2. Category 2    | 40mph    | 35mph             | 30mph       |
| 3. Category 3    | 30mph    | 25mph             | 20mph       |

Vehicle Category (Article 18)

Category 1: can be up to 46 Tonne

Category 2: can be up to 80 Tonne

Category 3: can be up to 150 Tonne

b MATE TO BE CARRIED (Article 22)

if - the width is more than 3.5m (11' 6")

- the load overhangs - see c) below

- the length is more than those mentioned in d) below.

c OVERHANGING LOADS (Article 23)

if the rearward overhang exceeds 1.07m (3' 6"): make visible, eg fit bright red or orange material at the rear end

if the rearward overhang exceeds 1.83m (6'): fit special marker boards

if the forward overhang exceeds 1.83m (6'): fit special marker boards and mate to be carried

if the forward and rearward overhang exceeds 3.05m (10'): special marker boards, mate and notify police on a special form - see also d) below and "General" on page 3.

d ADVANCE WARNING TO THE POLICE (Article 25) & ADVANCE WARNING TO THE ROAD AND BRIDGE AUTHORITIES (Article 26)

Weight exceeding C and U limits up to 80,000 kg gross

2 clear days' notice with indemnity to Highway and Bridge Authorities

Gross weight exceeding 80,000 kg up to 150,000 kg

2 clear days' notice to Police and 5 clear days' notice with indemnity to Highway and Bridge Authorities

Gross weight exceeding 150,000 kg

Department of Transport Special Order plus 5 clear days' notice to Police and 5 clear days' notice with indemnity to Highway and Bridge Authorities

Width exceeding 2.9m (9' 6") up to 5.0m (16' 5")

2 clear days' notice to Police

Width exceeding 5.0m (16' 5") up to 6.1m (20')

Department of Transport Form VR1 and 2 clear days' notice to Police

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Width exceeding 6.1m (20')   | Department of Transport Special Order plus 5 clear days' notice to Police and 5 clear days' notice with indemnity to Highways and Bridge Authorities |
| Length exceeding 18.3m (60') up to 27.4m (89' 11")<br>(vehicle or train of vehicles) | 2 clear days' notice to Police   |
| Length exceeding 27.4m (89' 11") rigid   | Department of Transport Special Order plus 5 clear days' notice to Police and 5 clear days' notice with indemnity to Highway and Bridge Authorities  |

#### MOBILE ENGINEERING PLANT (Article 19)

- 7 This is a piece of self-propelled, or trailed, machinery, eg a mobile crane which cannot meet some of the C & U Regulations because of the job it is designed to do - the legal definition is in Article 3 under "Engineering Plant" and the road use rules are in Article 19.

#### CONDITIONS

- 8 If you want to move this sort of vehicle on its own wheels, it must meet some C & U Regulations and, depending on its weight and size, comply with special conditions. There are:-
- a SPECIAL SPEED LIMIT (Article 21)  
Same rules as for abnormal loads carriers see 6a.
  - b MATE TO BE CARRIED (Article 22)  
the same rules as for an abnormal load carrier - see 6b) opposite
  - c OVERHANGING JIBS, BOOMS, ETC (Article 23)  
the same rules as for overhanging loads - see 6c) opposite
  - d ADVANCE WARNING TO THE POLICE (Article 25)  
the same rules as for an abnormal load carrier - see 6d) opposite but the Police must also be notified if the overall length exceeds 18.3m.
  - e ADVANCE WARNING TO ROAD AND BRIDGE AUTHORITIES (Article 26)  
the same rules as for an abnormal load carrier - see 6d) opposite

#### GENERAL

- 9a NOTICES AND INDEMNITIES - the form of the notice set out in the 1979 STGO can be sent to the road and bridge authorities and/or the Police as appropriate. All parts should be completed if possible. Your notice should have plenty of space to describe the route. Forms of indemnity should be sent to road and bridge authorities only. Notices and indemnities must be in the hands of the authorities for the whole of the 2 or 5 day periods which do not include a Saturday, Sunday, Bank Holiday, Christmas Day or Good Friday. To ensure that your notices get there in time, you must send them by fax or 1st class post and mark them "ABNORMAL LOADS".
- b WEIGHT AND SIZE LIMITS UNDER THE STGO  
Total weight - 150,000kg Axle weight - 16,500kg  
Rigid length - 30m Width - 6.1m

IT IS ILLEGAL TO EXCEED THOSE LIMITS UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT HAS ISSUED AN INDIVIDUAL AUTHORISATION.

- c INDIVIDUAL AUTHORISATIONS - if you want an authorisation, apply in writing, with full details, at least 8 weeks in advance of the move to:-

Department of Transport  
VSE 5  
Room 2/02 Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
LONDON SW1P 4DR

Tel. 0171 271 4617  
Fax. 0171 271 5856

WARNING - DO NOT ASSUME THAT YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY GET AN AUTHORISATION. EACH REQUEST IS DEALT WITH ON ITS MERITS AND NOT ALL REQUESTS ARE GRANTED.

- d PENALTIES - if the conditions or limits in the STGO are not met and you have not got an authorisation then your vehicle is most likely being operated contrary to the C & U Regulations. The penalties for this can be high - up to £400 fine for each offence plus possible endorsement or disqualification.

#### EXTRA SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- 10 In addition to observing the legal requirements outlined in this guide, please take particular note of the following:-

a BRIDGES & POWER LINES

If you are moving a high load or vehicle, you are strongly urged

(a) to survey the route beforehand to check that it can pass safely beneath bridges and cables and

(b) to contact Electricity Boards along the route if the vehicle, etc exceeds 16' 6" in height.

The STGO requires that where the highest point on the vehicle or load is more than 12' high, a notice showing the height must be displayed in the cab to help the driver know whether he can get under a bridge or lines safely.

There is no statutory limit governing the overall height of a load, however wherever possible it should not exceed 4.953m (16' 3") in order that the maximum use possible can be made of the motorway and major trunk road network.

b LEVEL CROSSINGS

Some level crossings have a slight hump and a long low vehicle could get grounded with possibly disastrous results. On those level crossings which also have overhead power lines, the hump can affect the apparent height of any high projecting load and this could come closer than is safe to the electric cables. So if you are driving a low loader or vehicle with a high, long load or jib, be sure to take good notice of the special road signs at level crossings.