NESCAUM

CLEAN TRANSPORTATION POLICY BRIEF

Electric Truck Weight Limits

Federal law permits vehicles fueled primarily by natural gas or electric power to exceed the weight limit on the power unit (e.g., the tractor portion of a tractor trailer) by 2,000 pounds, up to a maximum gross vehicle weight limit of 82,000 pounds, when operating on federal highways. Increasing state weight limits by 2,000 pounds for battery-powered trucks ensures consistency with federal weight limits and minimizes potential issues related to how the heavier weight of electric trucks may affect payload capacity.

Policy Applicability

☐Passenger Cars ☒Medium- and Heavy Duty

What states allow increased weight limits for electric trucks?

Several states have adopted laws to align state weight limits for natural gas and battery electric trucks operating on state roads with the federal interstate weight limits for such vehicles, such as: AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, MI, NC, NE, NV, OH, OK, OR, PA, TN, TX, UT, and VA. In addition, while not specific to electric trucks, WA has a maximum gross vehicle weight limit of 105,500 pounds that exceeds the federal weight limits for electric trucks.

Example policies to consider

In North Carolina, NC Gen Stat § 20-118(c)(19) provides, "Any additional weight allowance authorized by 23 U.S.C. § 127, and applicable to all interstate highways, also applies to all State roads, unless the road is a posted road or posted bridge" or is otherwise prohibited by state law or transportation department ordinance for a specific road.

California law provides that "the power unit of a near-zero emission or zero-emission vehicle may exceed the allowable gross weight limits by up to a maximum of 2,000 pounds" provided the maximum gross vehicle weight does not exceed 82,000 pounds.

Other resources

This Federal Highway Administration memorandum discusses the 2019 amendments to 23 USC §127(s) that increased the federal interstate weight limits for battery electric vehicles.

This UC Davis Institute of Transportation Studies report evaluates the effects of increased weights of alternative fuel trucks on pavement and bridges.

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