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# Overloading (the basics)

HGV

An executive agency of the  
Department for  
**Transport**

 Saving lives, safer roads, cutting crime, protecting the environment

To find your nearest public weighbridge, go to [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk) and find your local office. On your local office's website you will find a list of weighbridges in your area. It is recommended that companies with a fleet of trucks should install a fixed axle weighbridge or portable axle weighing system. Most public weighbridges are open 8am to 4pm on weekdays and 8am to 12pm on Saturdays.

## Public Weighbridges:

- ▶ **Find the maximum permitted axle weight and Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW).** This could be on a manufacturer's plate or a Department for Transport plate which is usually located in the vehicle cabin, under the bonnet or on the chassis of trailers. If your vehicle has manufacturer and Department for Transport plated weights, the Department for Transport limits should be used as these are the legal limits in GB.
- ▶ **Be careful not to mix up the Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) with the Gross Train Weight (GTW).** The GVW is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle (plus any load it is carrying), while the GTW is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle plus any trailer being towed.

- ## Ways of preventing a vehicle becoming overloaded:
- ▶ **Know the weights of your vehicle and load.** If possible, weigh the vehicle to establish individual axle weights.
  - ▶ **Re-Distribute your load appropriately** after any drop-offs to avoid overloading axles.
  - ▶ **Check the Gross Vehicle Weight** before setting out, either using your own weighbridge, or one nearby. You are allowed to drive to the nearest available weighbridge to check your load and then go to a place where they can take off some of the load if the vehicle is overloaded.
  - ▶ **Do not automatically trust declared weights, invoices or delivery notes given to you by customers.** Remember that you hold the responsibility for not overloading, not the customer.
  - ▶ **Remember that the GVW and GTW include the weight of the vehicle, load, trailer (for GTW) driver and any passengers.** Also allow for the weights of any pallets or packing cases.
  - ▶ **Make sure that your lift / tag axle is used correctly.** Not using this axle when the vehicle is loaded means that axles or gross weights could exceed their allowed limits.

# Overloading...

VOSA may prohibit your vehicle and prevent it from moving until some of the load has been moved or removed



...the risks outweigh the benefits



Running overloaded could result in prosecution

## The effects of overloading a vehicle:

- ▶ It makes the vehicle less stable, difficult to steer and take longer to stop. Vehicles react differently when the maximum weights which they are designed to carry are exceeded. The consequences can be fatal.
- ▶ Massive strain is put on vehicle tyres. Overloading can cause the tyres to overheat and wear rapidly which increases the chance of premature, dangerous and expensive failure (such as blow outs).
- ▶ Insurance cover is void. Overloading a vehicle is illegal and therefore insurance cover can be voided if the vehicle is involved in a crash.
- ▶ It causes excessive wear and damage to roads, bridges and pavements at the expense of the tax payer.
- ▶ It is unfair on other operators. Exceeding weight limits is unfair competition as more load is moved per journey.
- ▶ Fuel consumption increases when carrying extra load, which will increase your costs.

## Legislation

The Road Traffic Act 1988 requires “vehicle users” to ensure that vehicles are not overloaded.

The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 require that “all parts and accessories and the weight distribution, packing and adjustment of their loads shall be such that no danger is likely to be caused to any person in or on the vehicle or trailer or on the road.”

All companies have a ‘duty of care’ under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1999** for the safety of employees at work. This means that an employer must do all they can to ensure the safety of that driver, including having policies in place to ensure that their vehicle is not overloaded. The Act also places a duty of care on the employer to carry out suitable risk assessments. The operator has a moral and legal responsibility which is shared with the driver of the vehicle.