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DATE: 3/30/2026  
TO: Local Bridge Owners  
FROM: Alex Pence, P.E.  
SUBJECT: Evaluation of Overweight Loads on Local Bridges

This memorandum provides local bridge owners with expectations and resources for evaluating and documenting overweight loads crossing bridges.

As part of National Bridge Inspection Standards, [23 CFR 650.313\(k\)\(3\)](#) requires bridges to be analyzed for routine and special permit loads to verify the bridge can safely carry the load. As part of oversight and annual Quality Assurance (QA) reviews for compliance, WisDOT Bureau of Structures (BOS) or the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) may request documentation on single-trip overweight permits issued over the past year for bridges included in the QA review.

While local agencies should store copies of issued permits in their own records, QA reviews only require producing documents summarizing the bridge evaluation aspects, including:

1. Identification of the permit issued (permit number or another unique identifier)
2. Date permit issued or date of evaluation
3. Gross vehicle weight
4. Bridges crossed
5. Vehicle configuration details (number of axles, axle weights, axle spacings)
6. Travel restrictions (lanes of travel, speed restrictions, escort or traffic control), if applicable
7. Responsible party (who performed the evaluation)

Local agencies with permitting authority on bridges must be able to retrieve and provide this information for any bridge upon request. The storage location should be recorded on [Form DT1729 \(Bridge File Documentation\)](#), collected during QA reviews. The documentation requirements only apply to overweight loads requiring single-trip permits, not permits issued for size (length, width, or height) alone or loads that qualify for multiple-trip permits. Additionally, it is only required for bridge-length structures (spans greater than 20 feet).

They may meet this requirement using either of the following methods:

- **Automated Permitting System Reports:** Some agencies with high overweight permit volume use an automated permitting system or collect permit application data in digital databases. These systems shall allow reports to be produced based on a query of bridge ID and date range. As a minimum for a tabulated report for a given bridge, items 1 through 3 shall be included as columns. Remaining items may also be included in the tabulated report or could alternately be recorded in individual documents traceable to each Permit ID.
- **Manual Spreadsheet Log:** Maintain a manual log in a spreadsheet program (e.g. Microsoft Excel). The log must be organized so permits affecting a specific bridge can be readily searched and identified. As in the previous option, the tabulated summary report only needs to include items 1 through 3, if items 4 through 7 are recorded in individual documents traceable to each Permit ID.

To help with proper evaluation requirements, BOS has developed several resources to aid local agencies. These were identified based on feedback in a survey conducted in Summer 2025.

- BOS will provide training on overweight load evaluation on local bridges, occurring in April 2026. This will be a recorded webinar posted to the BOS website. This training will include information on how to read bridge load ratings and bridge locations in the Highway Structure Information System (HSIS), how to use those load ratings for overweight load evaluation, insights and best practices observed from the survey, and documentation requirements.
- The Overweight Permit Bridge Evaluation Aid, a Microsoft Excel file that provides visual comparison of permit configurations to standard load rating vehicle configurations. This allows the evaluator to use load rating data available in HSIS to perform a screening to approve clearly acceptable loads or identify potentially problematic loads.
- For overweight loads of unique configurations or very heavy weights, or when the evaluator is otherwise uncertain of the bridge's capacity to carry an overweight load, request for BOS assistance may be sent to [bridge.ratings@dot.wi.gov](mailto:bridge.ratings@dot.wi.gov). Since BOS maintains load rating models for most local bridges as part of the Local Bridge Rating Program, the evaluation for a specific truck configuration can usually occur very quickly, however BOS may advise the local agency and hauler to seek other assistance (e.g., an engineering consultant) if resource availability or complex situations require it. Please allow up to 3 business days for a response to most assistance requests. When BOS assists with an overweight permit evaluation, the local bridge owner maintains final authority on approvals, travel restrictions and denials.

Additionally, **BOS must be contacted** whenever local agencies receive requests for single-trip overweight permits traveling on **state-owned bridges** carrying local roadways (traveling over IH, USH, or STH). In these instances, the local agency is still the permitting authority, but WisDOT Bureau of Structures has the responsibility for evaluating the bridge for the load.

This memo and the above resources are available on the BOS website. For any questions on this policy, please contact me at [alex.pence@dot.wi.gov](mailto:alex.pence@dot.wi.gov) or (608) 267-6880.

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