Introducing Ontario's New Disabled Vehicle Supplemental Towing Certificate

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Disabled Vehicle Supplemental Towing Certificates

Background

The Ministry of Transportation issues routine "Annual Permits" authorizing tow trucks to operate as an overdimensional combination in order to remove vehicle(s) from the King's highways that are disabled, abandoned, stolen, involved in a collision, or otherwise unable to operate safely on a highway.

Annual Permits only authorize travel to the "First Suitable Exit" deemed to be the first viable location that does not jeopardize personal nor public safety or security, where the disabled vehicle combination may be safely and legally removed from the traveled portion of the highway, and examined to determine whether the vehicle(s) can be uncoupled, repaired, salvaged or off-loaded to reduce the vehicle(s) in as much as practicable to legal weights and dimensions.

Under some circumstances, where none of these options are available due to the nature of the vehicle breakdown or the commodity being carried, the vehicle combination must be towed to an alternate destination beyond this first exit. The Ministry has traditionally required operators to obtain a Single Trip O/O permit, where ministry staff verifies the routes to be taken as well as assess the risks involved and the justification for the prolonged travel.

In order to address concerns over the availability of these permits outside of normal business hours, the Ministry has instituted a self-enacted Supplemental Towing Certificate that, upon written justification, will allow operators to continue towing the disabled vehicle to an alternate location.

Permit Application

The Disabled Vehicle Supplemental Towing Certificates are available upon application at any Oversize/Overweight (O/O) Permit Issuing Office in the province. They are available for purchase as a group of 5 or 10 Certificates (alternate quantities may be purchased upon request) at the prevailing costs of a dimensional only - Single Trip Permit. Application forms are available upon request at any issuing office.

The Certificates are issued to the applicant, and are not transferable to other carriers. In order to make application, the tow truck operator must have at least one valid Annual Permit authorizing the movement of a disabled vehicle or combination of vehicles. This permit number must be provided on the application form.
Enacting Certificate Privileges

Prior to departing from the scene of the disabled vehicle incident, or the "First Suitable Exit" location, the Tow Truck Driver must fill out the original "Disabled Vehicle Supplemental Towing Certificate" in full, including:

1. The tow truck's Annual Permit Number (authorizing movement of disabled vehicles) that will be carried onboard the tow truck.
2. The licence plate number and jurisdiction for the tractor or truck/bus being towed.
3. The licence plate number(s) and jurisdiction of the trailer(s) being drawn.
4. The location of the original incident, indicating the King's highway number and nearby intersecting roads.
5. The destination where the disabled vehicle combination is to be drawn.
6. The nature of the incident must be checked off as a collision, breakdown, impoundment or other (to be specified).
7. The routes to be traveled.
8. A detailed justification clearly defining why the towed vehicle combination must be towed to the indicated destination as an overdimensional configuration.
9. The driver must then print his name and date of the move, prior to signing the certificate and placing the original certificate into the cab of the disabled vehicle.

Certificate Conditions and Eligibility Requirements

1. The Tow Truck Operator named on the issued Certificate becomes eligible to tow disabled vehicle(s) to the destination indicated on the face of the certificate using King's Highways listed.
2. The Certificate may be used to temporarily alter the limits and restrictions imposed upon all valid, existing Annual Permits that authorized the movement of a “Disabled vehicle” or a “Disabled combination of vehicles” towed by a tow truck.
3. For the purposes of the certificate, a disabled vehicle includes a vehicle that originates from a King's Highway location and is disabled, abandoned, stolen or involved in a collision or unable to operate safely on a highway.
4. In activating the certificate, and providing written justification on the face of the certificate, the operator has deemed that the disabled vehicle, or combination of vehicles, cannot be safely and practically uncoupled, repaired, salvaged, or off loaded at any intermediary location as prescribed in the tow truck Annual Permit, and must be towed directly to an alternate location to effect the necessary repairs and/or off-loading.
5. Once completed and signed as required, the ORIGINAL of the completed certificate must be placed in a clearly visible location inside the cab of the disabled vehicle.
6. The permit is only valid on the King’s Highways. All travel on municipal routes must be under separate authorization from the respective jurisdiction(s).

7. The carrier is entirely responsible for clearance verification of the routes to be traveled, as stipulated on all Annual Permits and remains responsible for any and all damage incurred while operating under the privileges of the certificate and accompanying permit.

8. All other terms and conditions of the original permit remain in effect unless specifically altered by the terms of the certificate.

9. A copy of the completed certificate must be faxed in to the Ministry of Transportation at (905) 704-2564 within 72 hours of completion of the move. The original certificate shall be kept on file at the carrier’s premises, and produced upon request to an officer appointed for carrying out the provisions of the Highway Traffic Act.

10. The certificate, as well as any carrier’s continued eligibility to utilize the privileges contained therein, may be terminated at the discretion of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles for breach of any condition of the certificate.

11. The Ministry reserves the right to cancel the use of the Disabled Vehicle Supplementary Towing Certificates, and terminate the program.

12. No refund will be issued for unused certificates, unless the program is terminated by the Ministry.

Q&A’s

Q. Is this a new requirement that did not exist before?

A. No. Annual Permits have always been available for tow truck operators to tow disabled vehicles as an oversized combination "as far as the nearest point off the traveled portion of the highway considered to be sufficiently removed from traffic as not to constitute a hazard". Vehicles are then expected to be uncoupled, repaired, salvaged or off-loaded, prior to continued travel as a legal towed vehicle combination. Where this is impractical, provisions have been in place to allow operators to self-issue a permit, enabling them to tow an oversized vehicle combination to an alternate location, providing they produce justification for the extended travel. The process then required the operator to fax-in the application before proceeding with the move.

This is a streamlined approach to the same process that will better facilitate operations in the field.

Q. What benefit does this new process provide?

A. The previous “fax-in” application process was neither convenient nor practical to the industry. The expectation that operators would proceed only as far as the first suitable exit, before determining that the vehicle
combination would have to be towed to an alternate location, was not realistic. The faxing requirements (and technology) were difficult to accomplish from the field, often requiring operators to shuttle documentation out to the tow truck, producing unacceptable delays.

The new process allows all paperwork to be prepared prior to departure, with only minimal delay. Permit requirements ensure that justification for the extended move is documented beforehand, and secured in the cab of the disabled vehicle.

Q. Is this a new expense being imposed on the towing industry?
A. The requirements for supplementary permitting of oversized towed vehicle combinations have always existed. The introduction of an improved permitting process is expected to increase industry’s compliance with the additional permitting requirements.

Q. If the tow truck industry can effectively issue themselves individual trip permits, why can they not just tow the vehicles where they need to go under the authority of an Annual Permit?
A. Vehicles being towed by a tow truck are inherently not as safe as conventional vehicles. The steering, braking, maneuverability, operating speed, cornering characteristics and weight distribution of these vehicle combinations are all compromised while under tow. In the interests of highway safety, the Ministry objectives are to minimize the unnecessary movement of these vehicles. The permitting requirements places an onus upon the industry to justify extended travel in recognition of the risks involved, while the fees & associated logistics provide a deterrent to non-essential operations.

Please direct any other questions regarding this initiative to Robert Barsalou, Weight & Load Engineer, at 905-704-2518 or robert.barsalou@ontario.ca.

Attachments:

- Blank application form - Disabled Vehicle Supplemental Towing Certificate
- Instructions for Completing the Disabled Vehicle Towing Certificate Application
- Example of a completed Disabled Vehicle Supplemental Towing Certificate