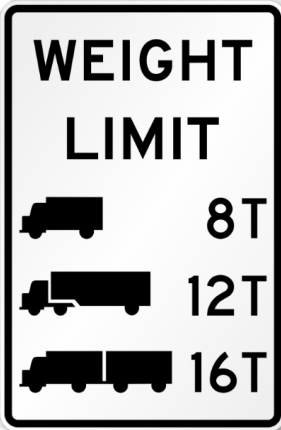


BRIDGE POSTING SIGN GUIDANCE

UNDERSTANDING BRIDGE WEIGHT LIMITS

This document is to help the traveling public and road users of Minnehaha County better understand bridge postings and how to interpret what the signs mean.

Obsolete Bridge Signs (No Longer Used)



Vehicle Weight	Visual Cue	Sign Limit
Single Unit Truck (Type 3)	One chassis with no separation between tractor and trailer.	8 Tons (16,000 pounds)
Standard Semi-truck (Type 3S2)	Gap visible between tractor and trailer; easily separated.	12 Tons (24,000 pounds)
Combination, or Tandem (Type 3-2)	Single-unit vehicle pulling a trailer.	16 Tons (32,000 pounds)

Because there are many different configurations of tractors pulling trailers with a variety of axle combinations (not accurately represented within the simple truck images in Figure 1), the enforceability of the sign shown above began to be challenged in court. Judges started ruling against enforcing overweight fines due to the confusion as perceived by the traveling public.

Current Bridge Signs (2015 to Present)

In 2015, to minimize confusion and improve the enforceability of over-weight violations, the South Dakota Department of Transportation changed their standard sign words rather than silhouettes. This provides clearer guidance for varied axle configurations.

Current Sign Definitions

Single Unit: Defined as all vehicles on a single frame including trucks, camping and recreational vehicles, motor homes, etc., regardless of the number of tires, axles, or axle configuration. Examples include trucks, camping and recreational vehicles, motor homes, school buses, delivery vans, ambulances, etc. The key is that the truck body cannot be easily separated from the power unit.

Combinations: Defined as being any vehicle in any combination of tractor (power unit) and trailer(s) whereby the tractor (power unit) can be easily separated from the unit(s) it is pulling – basically, everything that does not a single unit. Examples include vehicles pulling a boat or trailer, goosenecks, fifth-wheels, dump trucks, any tandem truck, etc.

Examples of current signs



Single Unit: 18 tons, or 36,000 pounds total

Combinations: 28 tons, or 56,000 pounds total

Bridge weight limit signs may also be shown like this. They apply to all vehicles, including cars, trucks, vans, farm equipment, and RVs.



10 tons, or 20,000 pounds regardless of the number of axles and axle configuration.

It is recognized that some confusion may persist since some “single unit” vehicles are rated over 33,000 GVW (cement trucks, large garbage trucks, fuel trucks, refrigerated vans, large furniture trucks, commercial touring buses vs. school busses vs. transit buses). However, the text contained herein is the direction we have been given by the SDDOT and the terms as defined by FHWA.

We assume additional guidance from the SDDOT will be forthcoming. In the meantime, when in doubt – be conservative and don’t cross. As a driver of any vehicle, it is your responsibility to know the weight rating of your vehicle, what you are hauling, and ensure it is properly loaded and secured.

This practice will not only save our bridges and protect you from potentially being fined, it may save your life or your neighbor’s life!

Still not sure if you should cross?

If you are unsure if your vehicle can safely cross a posted bridge, follow these four steps to reach a decision.

1. Determine your Legal Maximum Weight

What is the maximum allowable gross vehicle weight and the maximum allowable weights for the various axle groups for the specific configuration of the single unit or combination vehicle in question? Below are some tools to help you find that answer.

- South Dakota Department of Transportation [Legal Weight Calculator](#)
- Bridge Weight Formula (Motor Carrier Handbook, Chapter 5)
- Bridge Weight Tables (Motor Carrier Handbook, Chapter 5)

2. Verify Your Actual Load

Is the actual gross vehicle weight and the actual weights of the various axle groups for the single unit or combination vehicle less than the above calculated maximum legal weights?

- NO: Your vehicle is not legally loaded. You must shift or unload part of the load before proceeding.
- YES: Proceed to Step 3.

3. Check for Posting Signs

Is there a load posting sign at the structure? We have a map located on our website if you are unsure.

- NO: The structure is rated for legally loaded vehicles. You may cross.
- YES: Proceed to Step 4.

4. Compare Weight to Sign Limit

Is the actual gross vehicle weight of the single unit or combination vehicle equal to, or less than, the applicable posted weight limit?

- YES: Your vehicle may safely cross the structure.
- NO: Your vehicle exceeds the limit. **Do not cross.** Seek an alternate route.

Reminder: As a driver, it is your responsibility to know your vehicle's weight rating and ensure your load is secured. When in doubt, be conservative and do not cross.

Contact Information

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