



Notes regarding Over-Dimensional Freight

Each state has different requirements for oversize shipments, so it's important to know the legal requirements for each state. For that reason, and many others, navigating the specialized world of Over-Dimensional freight can be tricky. Steelman has 20+ years experience in moving this type freight. We have the equipment and expertise to assist you in scheduling your O/D shipments.

The legal limits for flatbed loads. The legal limits for shipments are documented and fairly consistent from state to state in the U.S. In general, the maximum legal load width is 8.5 feet (102 inches) and the maximum height limit is also 102 inches; some western states will allow an additional 6" of height. Legal length is typically 48 to 53 feet and the maximum weight is about 46,000 pounds. Some trucks may be able to scale heavier, but 46,000 pounds is the standard.

Weight can also be the cause of the load being considered Over-Dimensional. Restrictions are applied on a per axle basis and if a shipment does not exceed the legal total weight limit, the load may be able to be adjusted to be a legal load once it does not exceed the per-axle limits.

The load may require travel escorts. The more common measurement that pushes shipments into the "oversize" category is width. Anything over 8.5 feet wide is considered oversized and shipments exceeding 12 feet wide may require 1 to 2 pilot vehicles in the front and/or back of the flatbed truck. In many states, shipments over 12 feet wide require travel escorts (or "pilot vehicles"). Once a load hits 15' wide, it is considered a "Super Load" which can require multiple escort cars, utility trucks, highway patrol assistance, etc. all of which charge a fee.

The role of these travel escorts is to forewarn flatbed drivers of special circumstances like accidents, construction zones, bridges, low wires, traffic jams and other possible hazards. They also serve in alerting the public of the presence of an oversized vehicle. Charges will be incurred by the customer in addition to the variable per-mile rates as customers typically pay for hotels and other accessorial charges which are included as part of the overall freight costs.

Factors that will impact your schedule: In most states, oversized loads with travel escorts may only be on the road from 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset, Monday through Friday. Many states restrict or prohibit driving over holidays or weekends. Before a load hits the road, drivers need permits for each state traveled with exact travel routes specified. All of these factors—especially the drive time restrictions and speed — present unique challenges for shippers trying to maintain schedules.

Permits have to be ordered with exact information, i.e., weight, height, length, diameter, ship date, delivery date, etc. otherwise they will have to be re-ordered which can create additional charges for the customer as well as a delay in getting the load moving.

Also, a load may have to be inspected by authorities prior to leaving the shipping facility. These inspections are not scheduled by the carrier but by the inspecting agency and any change in customer schedule can have a ripple effect in getting a load inspected.

Generally carrier quotes will be estimates until all the final details are known about the load which may be after delivery but a legitimate quote will provide a ballpark figure and provide you with some of the factors that can effect your rate directly.

Carriers are responsible for obtaining the permits but an O/D load cannot be permitted if that load can feasibly be broken down in size or weight to be within legal dimensions.

*For additional information, specific questions or a quote please contact your Steelman Representative
800-488-6287 or 800-888-5561*