

## Dromedary truck-tractor is way to extend cargo-carrying capacity



This lead trailer has hay on wood slats that extend forward and add about 4 feet of cargo-carrying capacity, but in Oregon the total combined trailer distance cannot go beyond 68 feet. The maximum length limit has been set in law since the long combination vehicle freeze of 1991.



Generally, Oregon laws regarding vehicle length limits allow carriers to use a dromedary truck-tractor to extend cargo-carrying capacity. A truck-tractor with a drom box up to 12 feet 6 inches in length (including the load) may tow a semitrailer and trailer. When the drom box exceeds 12 feet 6 inches, or when the power unit is stinger steered, only one trailer may be towed.

Motor carriers can run up against long-standing vehicle length limits when they try to extend their cargo-carrying capacity. Since the nationwide long combination vehicle freeze of 1991, truckers in Oregon who operate a truck tractor and two trailing units have been confined to a 68-foot total trailer length limit.

According to Ed Scrivner, Field Services Manager for ODOT's Motor Carrier Transportation Division, it's important to remember that trailer length is measured from the front of the 1st trailer to the rear of the 2nd trailer, including the tongue. And what some carriers don't realize is that any load-bearing surface is considered part of the trailer.

"Some operators who try to extend their loads end up finding that it breaks the trailer length limits," Scrivner said. "It's not a big problem, but every once in a while we have to remind people that a load-bearing surface is actually considered part of the length of the trailer. Under federal regulations, we must measure the trailer AND any load-bearing surface."

Rather than using plates or boards to hang a load off a trailer, Scrivner recommends that carriers attach a dromedary plate, deck or box to their truck-tractor frame and carry more cargo that way.

This can give carriers more flexibility in vehicle lengths because Oregon administrative rules authorize dromedary truck-tractor and semi-trailer combinations up to certain lengths. A variance permit may be needed depending on the route traveled, and a permit is certainly needed for any combination that exceeds 80,000 pounds.

For more information about drom box lengths, overall lengths, and approved routes, contact the Motor Carrier Division, Over-Dimension Permit Unit, at 503-373-0000.