

Detailed Explanation of s.348.27(9m)(a)4. - Raw Forest Products Permit on vehicles or vehicle combinations with 6-axles and a maximum gross vehicle weight of 98,000 lbs, during Spring Thaw  
**(updated to reflect changes in 2011 Act-117)**

Background:

Annual and consecutive month permits, also known as multiple trip permits, that allow increased weights to be transported are authorized by Wisconsin statutory section 348.27. A sub-set of such permits issued by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) authorize transport of specified divisible commodities. By statute, many of these WisDOT permits are valid on local, town and county highways as well as State highways, US highways and a segment of Interstate 39. Maintenance authorities in cities, villages, towns and counties have varying authority to limit use of the WisDOT multiple trip permits – See each sub-section of s.348.27 for specifics.

Multiple trip permits that authorize transport of divisible loads are temporarily suspended when WisDOT engineers declare the State, US and Interstate highways to be in Spring Thaw. This temporary suspension of such permits is authorized by statutes 348.17 and 349.16.

Until 1999, no permit for transport of divisible commodities was exempt from temporary suspension during spring thaw. In 1999, the Legislature authorized that permits for transport of potatoes for seed could be exempt from temporary suspension during spring thaw. This authorization was for a very limited route involving two state highways and, with approval of the maintenance authority, a small group of adjacent county and town roads.

In 2010, Act 222 required that certain permits for transport of raw forest products, provided for in section 348.27(9m)(a)4., expressly authorized transport exceeding any limitations in connection with the thawing of frozen highways on state highways. That exception was further broadened in 2012 by Act 117, to include all local roads. The permit holders are subject to posted weight limitations of any kind on local roads, as well as postings on state highways unless the posting on a marked route of a State or US Highway is a seasonal weight restriction.

Spring Thaw Restrictions and the Raw Forest Products Permit:

Only WisDOT may issue the permit authorized by section 348.27(9m)(a)4. - the Raw Forest Permit, also known as the “98k on six axles permit” or the “RS Permit”. The commodity authorized for transport is raw forest products (as defined in s.348.01(2)(bt); this is a divisible commodity. RS Permits are valid on public streets and highways except Interstate highways. Permit holders may not exceed posted weight limits on any street or highway except for seasonal postings on marked State or US routes. Permit holders may not exceed posted limits on State or US routes that restrict weights on pertain to bridges, culverts, or restrictions that

are not related to the thawing of frozen highways. RS permits do authorize exceeding posted weight limits only on State or US highways that are posted in connection with the thawing of frozen highways.

### Summary Bullet Points

- The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is the only agency that may issue a “Raw Forest Products Permit (RS Permit) per Wis Statute 348.27(9m)(a)4.
- The RS Permit authorizes transport of “raw forest products” up to 98,000 lbs gvwt on vehicles or vehicle combinations with six or more axles; no axle may exceed the axle weights set in the statute.
- During the spring thaw period established by WisDOT, the RS Permit allows transport on any highway that is a marked State or US route including those posted to limit weights seasonally in connection with thawing of frozen roads. RS permits also remain valid during spring thaw on all other public roads but are subject to all posted weight limits, including seasonal limits.
- RS Permits are not valid on Interstate highways.
- RS permits do not authorize exceeding posted weight limits, except for seasonal limits on marked State or US routes in connection with thawing of frozen roads.