



## BRIDGE WEIGHT LIMITS FOR EMERGENCY VEHICLES

Starting in Fall 2020, Wisconsin DOT will begin placing new signage at bridges on and near the Interstate indicating Emergency Vehicle (EV) weight limits.

- 14 bridges are impacted statewide in 2020
- List of bridges impacted can be found at <https://wisconsin.gov/Documents/dmv/shared/ev-postings.pdf>

*Background:* On December 4, 2015, the federal legislation Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law. The FAST Act increased allowable weight limits for emergency vehicles on the Interstate system and within one-mile access to and from the Interstate.



The FAST Act defines an emergency vehicle as one designed to be used under emergency conditions to transport personnel and equipment to suppress fires and mitigate other hazardous situations. The increased allowable weight limits for EVs are:

- 86,000 pounds gross vehicle weight
- 24,000 pounds on a single steering axle
- 33,500 pounds on a single drive axle
- 62,000 pounds on a tandem axle
- 52,000 pounds on a tandem rear drive axle



Because these weight limits are higher than those in place for standard commercial vehicles, some bridges without standard weight limit postings will now need EV-specific weight restrictions. Allowing heavy EVs to be exempt from standard weight limits without requiring a permit has obvious benefits, but this exemption also requires operators to become aware of bridges’ EV-specific capacities, to avoid compromising safety, serviceability, and durability.

Load rating and posting for vehicles is mandated by the National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS), and these requirements now include FAST Act EVs. Following the FAST Act, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued guidance and timelines for states to evaluate and if necessary, restrict bridges for heavy EVs.

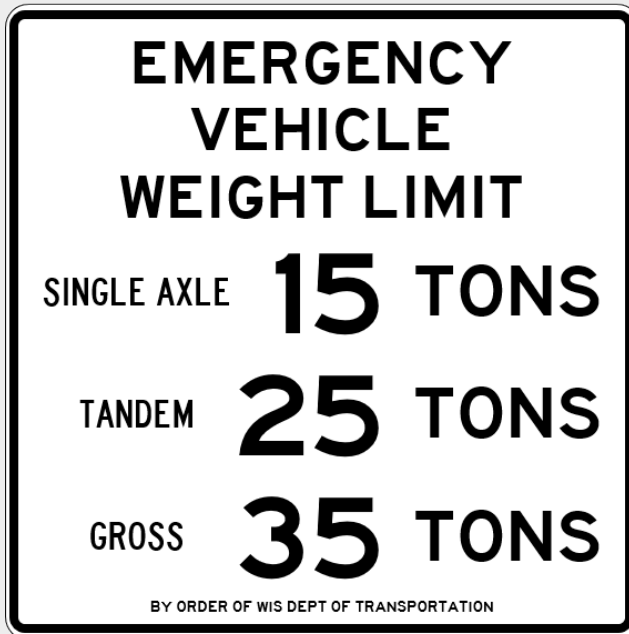
Because Wisconsin Statutes also allow EVs to exceed standard commercial vehicle weight limits beyond one-mile access from the Interstate, WisDOT is also evaluating all other bridges for the FAST Act EV configurations. This project is to be completed by December 2022. However, WisDOT will not be posting EV weight limit signs for bridges beyond one mile from the Interstate. Instead, heavy emergency vehicle operators (typically fire departments) will rely on the online list for EV weight limits on bridges in their service area.

For more information, contact Alex Pence at WisDOT Bureau of Structures: [alex.pence@dot.wi.gov](mailto:alex.pence@dot.wi.gov) | 608-267-6880

### Additional Resources:

- [Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act \(FAST Act\) Truck Size and Weight Provisions](#)
- [FHWA Memorandum on Load Rating for the FAST Act’s Emergency Vehicles](#)
- [Questions and Answers: Load Rating for the FAST Act’s Emergency Vehicles](#)
- [Fire Apparatus Manufacturers’ Association Emergency Vehicle Size and Weight Guide](#)

## UNDERSTANDING EMERGENCY VEHICLE WEIGHT LIMIT SIGNS



The tonnage values shown here are examples only. Posted values will vary from bridge to bridge based on the capacity.

### **Single Axle:**

Allowable weight on any individual axle. If two axles are less than 40 inches apart, they are to be considered a single axle with their combined weight subject to the single axle weight limit.

### **Tandem:**

Allowable total weight on two or more consecutive axles over 40 inches apart but not over 96 inches apart. If there are 3 axles within that distance, they are also to be considered a tandem.

### **Gross:**

The total allowable weight of the vehicle.

EV weight limit signs only apply to emergency vehicles, most commonly firetrucks, that may exceed standard highway weight limits without a permit. Operators driving non-emergency vehicles should continue to follow standard weight limit regulation and signage, obtaining permits when necessary (refer to Wisconsin Statutes Ch. 348).

EV weight limit signs will only be placed at each of end of the bridge, without advanced warning at nearby intersections. The published online list of bridges with EV weight restrictions will be used to make operators aware of their locations in lieu of advanced warning signs.

EV operators should also follow standard gross weight limit signs in place for other vehicles. For example, if the bridge is already posted with a standard 30-ton gross weight limit for all vehicles, a new EV-specific weight limit sign will not be placed. Firetrucks exceeding 30 tons should avoid this bridge as well.