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## Escorting Abnormal Indivisible Loads Policy

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<b>Owning Department</b>	Operations Division
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## 1. POLICY AIM

The aim of this policy is:

- To provide members of Dorset Police with guidance on the procedures to be followed for the administration and escort of abnormal indivisible loads within Dorset.
- To implement the findings of the 1998 Association of Chief Police Officers' review on the privatisation of abnormal indivisible load escorts and to implement their recommendation to shift responsibility for the management of the movement of abnormal indivisible loads from the police to the hauliers.
- In accordance with the legal emphasis of road traffic legislation and health and safety at work legislation, to place the responsibility for the safe movement of abnormal indivisible loads onto the haulage industry. Dorset Police will no longer escort abnormal indivisible loads unless circumstances exist where the Force Abnormal Loads Office deems a police escort necessary or where this Policy states the escort as a requirement.
- To implement the findings of the policing bureaucracy task force (2002) recommendations to remove the burden of escorting abnormal and indivisible loads from the police service

## 2. RATIONALE/LEGAL BASIS

Dorset Police recognises the importance to the county's economy of the ability of the haulage industry to safely, successfully and efficiently transport abnormal indivisible loads on the highways network of the county. Legislation does not contain any requirement for any abnormal indivisible load to be escorted. Legally enforceable standards exist for the notification of abnormal indivisible load movement to both the Chief Constable and the Highways Authorities. Dorset Police is not responsible for ensuring the safe operational passage of abnormal indivisible loads on the roads of Dorset (unless the abnormal indivisible load is being escorted by the police); this is the role of the Haulier. However, all officers should be cognisant of their primary responsibility to preserve life.

The police are the only authority empowered by legislation to vary time, date or route of an abnormal indivisible loads or to stop a load on a road, **for the purposes of preventing congestion or in the interests of road safety**. As such, as the police have been empowered in this way, it is reasonable to assume they are expected to exercise this power to ensure that safety is not compromised by any abnormal indivisible load movement. Recent research conducted by the Transport Research Laboratory indicates that there is a significant increase in risk in the movement of abnormal indivisible loads during the hours of darkness. This policy takes account of that research.

Therefore, the police have a duty of care to ensure that the permitted route, time and date of movements are risk assessed in compliance with current Health and Safety guidelines. Although there is also a duty of care placed on the hauliers when undertaking an abnormal indivisible loads movement, road suitability and safety assessments may not be

to the standard that the police would apply, either from local knowledge or known history for the area.

The introduction of private escorts was proposed by The Association of Chief Police Officers in 1993 and was the subject of various trials and consultations. EDMC management consultants were tasked with producing a consultative document, in which methods of training, accreditation and authorisation of private escorts were recommended, together with legislative changes required for the introduction of private escorts on motorways and linking dual carriageways. Their report was presented to the Home Office in 1998.

A meeting in March 2002 between The Association of Chief Police Officers, the Home Office and the Department for Transport reconfirmed the wish to move forward the introduction of the principle of private or self-escorting abnormal indivisible loads.

Since that time the use of police resources for the escorting of abnormal indivisible loads has been the subject of continual discussion in both Houses of Parliament and within the haulage industry.

The police bureaucracy task force recommended that the escorting of abnormal indivisible loads by police should be relinquished in favour of self or private escorts by December 2002.

The decision was taken by The Association of Chief Police Officers that the routine police escort of abnormal indivisible loads would cease with effect from 1 January 2004.

The following documents all impact upon this policy:

- The Association of Chief Police Officers / Home Office consultation document - Private Escorting of Abnormal Loads (EDMC, 1998).
- The Association of Chief Police Officers Guidance in respect of escorting abnormal indivisible loads (2000).
- Policing Bureaucracy Task Force (2002).
- The Association of Chief Police Officers / Highways Agency Roles and Responsibilities Review (2003).
- The Highways Agency Code of Practice for the self-escorting of Abnormal Loads and Abnormal Vehicles (2004).

### **3. LEGISLATIVE AND RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

This policy been assessed to establish its impact in relation to the requirements imposed by a range of legislation that might be affected by its implementation. A complete record of the impact assessment related to this policy is retained within the Quality & Development Department. A summary of this assessment is published on the Dorset Police website.

## **4 POLICY CONTENT**

### **4.1 Definitions**

#### **4.1.1 The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (STGO)**

This Order is a general order made under section 44(1) of the 1988 Road Traffic Act. It authorises road-use by certain special types of vehicles notwithstanding that they do not fully comply with regulations made under section 41 of the 1988 Road Traffic Act. It imposes the restrictions and conditions with which such vehicles must comply, including the extent to which regulations made under section 41 must be observed.

Abnormal Indivisible Load Vehicles are one of the specific vehicles authorised on permitted road use subject to STGO 2003. Such vehicles may only be used for the carriage and movement of abnormal indivisible loads.

#### **4.1.2 Department for Transport Form VR1 (Permit)**

This is required for vehicles/loads with widths exceeding 5 metres up to 6.1 metres.

### **4.2 Purpose**

4.2.1 This policy provides a framework for the management and administration of Dorset Police's response to escorting abnormal indivisible loads within the county, and to meet the requirements of legislation and regulations governing their movement.

4.2.2 The policy also sets out the standards for the provision of police service escort.

4.2.3 A summary of procedures for Dorset Police's administrative response to abnormal indivisible load escorts is at Appendix A.

### **4.3 Legislation**

4.3.1 The legislation that permits abnormal indivisible load movements is:

- Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (C & U), and
- Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (S.T.G.O.)

4.3.2 Generally, a load is deemed "abnormal" when it exceeds C & U regarding width, length or weight, namely:

- i) 2.9 metres wide or over or 0.305 metres lateral projection, OR

- ii) 44 Tonnes in weight or over, OR
- iii) 18.75 metres load length or 30 metres overall length, OR
- iv) 3.05 metres front or rear projection

4.3.3 C & U requires hauliers to notify the movement of all abnormal indivisible loads and abnormal indivisible vehicles to the police before moving them by road.

4.3.4 C & U is the primary legislation for the construction and maximum dimensions for all vehicles, and is the only legislation that can be used for prosecution purposes.

4.3.5 S.T.G.O. permits the use of vehicles and/or loads, which cannot comply with the maximum permitted weight, either gross or axle weight, for the class of vehicle being used for transporting a load.

4.3.6 S.T.G.O. also contains the regulations for loads that exceed the maximum width permitted by C & U, agricultural vehicles and many other miscellaneous vehicles.

4.3.7 The legislation is in the most part permissive, in that providing that the haulier complies with the requirements of notification procedures, an abnormal indivisible load can be moved without the need for any permit or authorisation. The only exceptions are as follows:

- loads exceeding 5.1 metres wide which require a form VR1 from the Department for Transport, which authorises the movement, but not the route, day or date. Once the VR1 has been issued the haulier can then use the normal notification procedure, quoting the VR1 reference.
- loads exceeding 6.1 metres wide, 30 metres rigid length or 150,000 kilogrammes weight, which require a special order from the Secretary of State. A special order ensures that the route is negotiable and may lay down certain conditions. It does not, however, replace the notification procedure.

4.3.8 The practice of police escorting abnormal indivisible loads is a self-imposed duty, established many years ago and initially undertaken for purposes of road safety and to minimise congestion.

4.3.9 Legislation does not contain any requirement for any abnormal indivisible load to be escorted by the police.

4.3.10 The escort criteria adopted by Dorset Police has been progressively adjusted over time, based on the Association of Chief Police Officers guidelines.

#### 4.4 Escort Policy

4.4.1 Dorset Police will comply with The Association of Chief Police Officers' recommendation to withdraw from the routine escorting of abnormal indivisible loads.

4.4.2 There will be four categories of abnormal indivisible load escort.

i) Police Escort

a) In line with nationally agreed guidelines and other South West Regional Forces, an escort will be provided for those vehicles that are subject to Special Orders under S.T.G.O. These loads are subject to special planning. A charge will be made for the provision of a police escort service (see para. 4.4.7 & 4.4.8 post).

b) Dorset Police will also escort an abnormal indivisible load where the haulier specifically requests such an escort or where the size of the load or the route proposed determine that it requires a police escort in the interest of road safety. The Dorset Police Abnormal Loads Department will carry out a risk assessment of each proposed abnormal indivisible load to make this determination and a charge will be made for the provision of a police escort service (see para. 4.4.6).

ii) Self-Escort (by or on behalf of the haulier).

Where a load falls below the Special Order criteria and either:

a) is above the Highways Agency Code of Practice criteria for self - escort to be provided,

or

b) is below the Highways Agency Code of Practice criteria for self - escort but there are concerns for safety due to the nature of the roads on the planned route, as determined by the Dorset Police Abnormal Loads Department

the hauliers will then be requested to provide their own escort vehicle (but see also para. 4.4.2, i) b) ante.

iii) Non-Escorted Loads

Where a load falls below the Highways Authority Code of Practice criteria for self - escort and there are no other safety considerations then a self - escort will not be required, although the haulier may still provide one.

4.4.3 Where the police are required to assist an abnormal indivisible load in order for it to negotiate a contradiction of a road traffic sign, i.e., to drive contrary to the one way system in Fortuneswell, Portland, such assistance will not be

charged for and will be carried out by Traffic Officers during their normal tour of duty. However, once this assistance has been rendered, the officers should normally end their involvement and return to their patrol function.

- 4.4.4 Where the haulier provides their own self/private escort, they are expected to comply with any instructions issued by Dorset Police, and to abide by the principles of the Highways Agency Codes of Practice “Self escorting of Abnormal Loads and Abnormal Vehicles” & “Operating Guidance for Abnormal Load escorting”.
- 4.4.5 Where a haulier fails to comply with police instructions and restrictions or the Highways Agency Code of Practice offences may be committed in contravention of C & U and S.T.G.O. Additionally, any incidents that occur will be examined in respect of Road Traffic legislation and criminal law.
- 4.4.6 Where a police escort is provided or assistance is required as in para. 4.4.3 ante, it will be conducted by officers from the Traffic Unit. These officers **must** ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, and will check all relevant documentation and compatibility with the load to be escorted. Assistance to direct a load at a given point may be conducted by other police officers, under the instruction of the Traffic Unit officers.
- 4.4.7 Where a police escort is provided, the police service will recover costs from the haulier on a strictly non-profit basis as follows:
- i) Only police officers from the Traffic Unit, performing overtime on their rest days will be utilised.
  - ii) Special duty payment rates for a minimum of four hours, and for every part of an hour thereafter will be charged.
  - iii) A charge for each police vehicle used will be made, to be determined by the Force Transport Department.
  - iv) A minimum of six days notice will be required for the arrangement of a police escort.
  - v) Charges to be paid in full in the event of any cancellation or amendment to the travel date, within eight days of the movement date first indicated.

## 4.5 The Highways Agency Code of Practice Criteria

4.5.1 The Highways Agency Code of Practice criteria for self-escort are:

Measurement	
Load/vehicle width exceeds	4.1m (13' 6")
Overall vehicle length exceeds	30.5m (100'00")

Overall vehicle/load height exceeds	4.87m (16'00")
Vehicle Gross weight exceeds	100 Tonnes

**4.6 Restrictions**

4.6.1 Once an abnormal indivisible load movement has been notified to Dorset Police, restrictions may be placed on the movement. These restrictions normally govern times and days that a load is permitted to move. This normally prevents an abnormal indivisible load from travelling during:

- i) the hours of darkness;
- ii) at weekends during the busy school summer holiday period;
- iii) bank holiday weekends;
- iv) during periods where a major event has been planned, i.e. 2012 Olympics
- v) at certain times of days such as “rush hours” (as a general guide between 0830 – 0930 hours and 1530 – 1800 hours).

4.6.2 Any deviation from the restrictions outlined in para. 4.6.1 above can only be given by the abnormal loads officer, having given due consideration to road safety and congestion issues, **except** in i) above (hours of darkness) where authority for any deviation can only be given by either the Superintendent or Chief Inspector, Special Operations, Operations Division.

4.6.3 Abnormal Loads Department personnel should give due consideration to the Local Highways Authorities’ Street-works Registers when approving any abnormal indivisible load movement.

4.6.4 Where a police escort is appropriate, the driver of the abnormal indivisible load, his/her attendants and any self / private escort provided will at all times comply with any instructions issued by Dorset Police, in relation to escorting abnormal indivisible loads.

4.6.5 The permitting of self / private escorting of abnormal indivisible loads will not remove the requirement of the driver and his/her attendants to comply with the road traffic act or any associated legislation regarding the use of any motor vehicle on a road.

4.6.6 In the event of any dispute with a haulier over the movement of an abnormal indivisible load, whether escorted or otherwise, a decision will be made by the abnormal loads officer in consultation with the senior Traffic officer available. A record should be made of the decision and rationale and will be retained by the Abnormal Loads Office for a period of 2 years.

## **4.7 Abnormal Indivisible Loads Dispensations**

4.7.1 Some hauliers regularly transport loads of a similar nature (usually caravans and mobile homes). Such companies may, on request, be granted a dispensation order by Dorset Police Abnormal Loads Department over predetermined routes for up to a year. Once the dispensation order has been authorised by Dorset Police, hauliers do not have to notify the police of such movements. They must comply with the following conditions otherwise consideration will be given to removing their dispensation:

- No movement of such loads on a bank holiday weekend
- No movement of such loads during the hours of darkness
- No movements during a period specified by the police, i.e., where a major event is proposed (i.e., 2012 Olympics)
- Maximum width of the vehicle and load must not exceed 3.5m
- There must be no other abnormality that requires notification
- The route must be suitable
- All legal requirements must be satisfied
- A copy of the notice of dispensation must be carried and produced to a police officer on demand

## **4.8 Administration**

4.8.1 All notifications and enquiries relating to abnormal indivisible loads will be dealt with by the Force Abnormal Loads Clerk.

4.8.2 On receipt of notification a reference number will be allocated from the abnormal loads office to the haulier. The original correspondence will be filed and kept for a period of 2 years.

4.8.3 In the event of a haulier sending notification direct to a police station or other office, the abnormal loads office will be immediately notified and the original correspondence forwarded via fax to the Abnormal Loads Office.

4.8.4 Details of the Abnormal Loads office and personnel can be found on the Force Intranet Portal.

## **4.9 Training Requirements**

4.9.1 Traffic officers will receive, as part of their basic training, details of legislation governing abnormal indivisible loads movements, together with practical training with an experienced officer (this is covered within the officer's New Traffic Officer Portfolio). Additionally, Traffic officers will have

access to an Aide Memoire (available on the Force Traffic Intranet Portal Library). This highlights the basic requirements for signage together with general advice on escorting.

**5 QUALITY ASSURANCE/AUTHORISATION/APPROVAL**

<b>Version 1.0</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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**6 STAFF ASSOCIATIONS**

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<b>Police Federation</b>	MR. C. CHAMBERLAIN		<b>14/7/08</b>
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## **Appendix A**

### **Procedures for the Office based function of Abnormal Indivisible Loads**

- Abnormal indivisible load notifications are faxed or e-mailed to the SEES Department at least two days before the date of movement. Short notice moves are decided at the discretion of the Abnormal Loads Clerk.
- Details of the abnormal indivisible load are entered onto the Force Wide system +ABL
- The date, time of travel, suggested route and the vehicle dimensions are checked and verified for suitability of movement. All moves are agreed on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the C & U, STGO legislation, ACPO and Dorset Police Policy and Guidelines.
- A decision is made on the requirement for; no escort, self escort or Police escort and entered on to the Dorset Police Force Wide system +ABL. The Traffic Unit and the Control Room are informed of the intended move if a Police escort is to be utilised. If part of the route requires no waiting cones a message is sent in advance via message switch +MS to the Relevant Police Station.
- If the proposed route is unsuitable for the size of load, or is affected by roadworks or other obstructions, an alternative route may be authorised. Dorset police will liaise with the Highways Agency to assess the suitability of any alternative route.
- The Abnormal Indivisible Loads Clerk sends an Authorisation Notice to the haulier containing instructions of the route and any escort requirements. The haulier must carry this during the abnormal indivisible load movement.
- Instructions are given to the haulier to make contact with the Force Control Room prior to all police escorted loads.
- All notifications received and instructions given are archived and kept for two years.
- STGO movements and other movements requiring a police escort require the paid services of a Police Officer. The Abnormal Indivisible Load Clerk sends an A51 form to the haulier in order to obtain agreement of payment. The recovery of payments is made through the Accounts Department at Police Headquarters.
- The full and detailed abnormal indivisible loads office based procedures are held within the abnormal loads office within the SEES department.