

# Road Weight Limits and Commercial Transport

## *Workshops Will Clarify the New Law and Provide Load Restriction Guidelines*

Many municipalities have set road weight limits and have had local commercial transporters recognize the need for them. In many instances, road agents and public works directors have set weight limits based on sound technical knowledge and experience. In other instances, town officials have set road weight limits in ways that seem unreasonable and even arbitrary.

In 1995 the Legislature addressed the latter situation. It found that "important sectors of commerce of this state depend, in part, on the efficient vehicle transport of unprocessed natural resources, manufactured goods and other commercial products across class IV, V, and VI municipal roads."

In an amendment to RSA 231 it authorized municipalities to "establish maximum weight limits, seasonal and otherwise...when the highway agent determines that such highway requires postings to prevent unreasonable damage or extraordinary municipal maintenance expense." It also urged municipalities to "not unreasonably infringe on the efficient movement of unprocessed natural resources, manufactured goods and other commercial products essential to a healthy state economy."

Since 1995 some commercial transporters considered municipal postings as unreasonably infringing on their operations. Responding to transporters' concerns, the Legislature recently passed a bill that becomes law on July 7, 2000. It provides that

- The municipal governing body will hold a hearing if requested by the impacted business, and
- If such hearing is not held within 15 days of notification, the maximum weight limits shall be suspended for the remainder of the year or until such hearing is held.

The new paragraph to RSA 231:191 is in the accompanying box. In the bill's preamble, the Legislature states that "Such posting shall be in

accordance with currently acceptable practices and technology."

This fall the UNH T<sup>2</sup> Center will hold workshops to clarify the new law and to discuss current practices. It will draw upon the experiences of road managers who have successfully dealt with setting and accommodating road weight limits.

Speakers will also describe the latest technology applicable to municipal roads. Participants will receive a recently revised *Guidelines for Spring Road Use Restrictions*. These guidelines are based on practices in other northern states. The procedure uses daily high and low temperatures to determine the extent of freezing and the onset of thawing. By recording temperatures, making a few simple calculations, and considering local situations, road managers can determine when to begin and end load restrictions.

### **New RSA 231:191, Paragraph VII**

VII. The governing body of a municipality which establishes maximum weight limits more restrictive than the limits set forth in RSA 266:17-26, for any class IV, V, or VI highway or portion of such highway, seasonal or otherwise, which restricts a commercial or industrial company operated or located in that municipality, shall hold a hearing if requested by the impacted business. The hearing shall be held within 15 working days of receipt of a certified letter by the local governing body from the impacted business requesting a hearing, otherwise enforcement of the maximum weight limits established by that municipality shall be suspended for the remainder of the year or until such hearing is held.