



# Department for Transport

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Dear Mr Murphy

## **Concrete pump operating weights**

I am writing following a number of discussions that you have held with my team in relation to an issue identified recently around the weight arrangements for a small number of concrete pumps.

As you are aware, mobile concrete pumps are eligible for operation under the Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (STGO), as 'engineering plant'. Under current 2 to 5 axle rigid vehicle configurations, this would constrain them to operating with a 12mph speed limit, and, where standard axle weights are breached, the provision of advance notification to bridge authorities.

We understand that there is a small number of vehicles that exceed the standard axle and gross weight limits by around 10%. We also understand that these vehicles are declining in number, as newer designs tend to comply with the standard weight limits. In addition, we recognise that there is a much smaller number of vehicles that exceed the standard weight limits much more considerably – these vehicles remain in production and are a specific solution to large jobs.

I recognise that, whilst these vehicles are subject to the STGO by virtue of not complying with the standard weight limits, it is longstanding practice that these vehicles are operated in excess of the 12mph speed limit that this entails and have not generally notified bridge authorities of their movements. I note the similarities in this respect to the situation of volumetric concrete mixers, where a temporary arrangement that takes into account their operational custom and practice has been recently announced.

In this context operators of concrete pumps that exceed the standard weights are invited to apply to the VCA for a Vehicle Special Order for their vehicle. We intend to make two types of VSO available to concrete pumps.

Concrete Pump VSO Type 1 will be suitable for a limited time (7 years) for the declining number of concrete pumps that exceed standard weights by a relatively small factor (12.5%), and follows the same broad principles as have been applied to volumetric concrete mixers. Concrete Pump VSO Type 2 will be suitable for those concrete pumps that exceed the standard weights by more than 12.5%, and will align their conditions of operation to those currently applicable to mobile cranes (which are used in a similar way to large concrete pumps).

I would like to emphasise the inherently temporary nature of VSO Type 1. The exceptional dispensations from the normal rules reflect a recognition of historical custom and practice in relation to some of the pre-existing fleet and there is no intention to extend it beyond 31 March 2025.

I would be grateful if you could cascade this information to relevant industry parties.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Price', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Duncan Price**

**Head of Freight, Operator Licensing and Roadworthiness Division**

## Annex

*VSO type 1: Temporary arrangement (until 31 March 2025) for vehicles exceeding standard weights by up to 12.5%*

The VSO will provide the following derogations from the standard requirements (all other requirements, including design weights, will continue to apply):

- In place of the usual gross vehicle weights specified in Schedule 1 (parts I and II) to the Road Vehicles (Authorised Weight) Regulations 1998 (“AWR”)<sup>1</sup>, the following gross weight limits will apply to the relevant MCBP design configuration. For all other design configurations, the usual AWR requirements will apply.  
2-axle rigid: 20.25 tonnes  
3-axle rigid: 29.25 tonnes  
4-axle rigid (or more than 4-axle rigid): 36 tonnes
- The gross weight must also not exceed 6 tonnes per metre of the front-rear axle distance.
- Schedule 3 to the AWR (axle weight limits) shall not apply. However, axle weights shall not exceed the limits set out in Schedule 3 by more than a factor of 12.5%.

Under these terms, these vehicles will be suitable for statutory goods vehicle testing. We would therefore require this for vehicles operating under this temporary arrangement as a condition of the VSO. Operators intending to operate vehicles under this arrangement should not declare those vehicles to be exempt from goods vehicle testing at the point of re-licensing them.

*VSO type 2: Alignment to conditions applicable to mobile cranes*

Alternatively, should the VSO Type 1 not be relevant for their vehicle (for example because the axle weights exceed standard limits by more than 12.5% or they are operated after 2025), operators may apply to operate under the same terms as equivalent configuration vehicles that are mobile cranes operating under the STGO. The only change would be that the crane-specific conditions would be modified to make them suitable for concrete pumps.

For the avoidance of doubt, this includes lower than usual speed limits and the requirement to notify bridge authorities where standard axle weights are exceeded or the gross vehicle weight exceeds 44 tonnes.

These vehicles would not be suitable for statutory goods vehicle testing and will, as mobile cranes being operated under the STGO, be exempt. We remind operators of their legal obligations to ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy, and encourage them to submit their vehicles for voluntary industry testing, where available.

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<sup>1</sup> Here and elsewhere, to be understood as referring alternatively to the equivalent provisions in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (as amended).

Operators intending to operate vehicles under this arrangement should declare those vehicles to be exempt from goods vehicle testing at the point of re-licensing them.

*Process for application*

Operators will need to contact the Vehicle Certification Agency to obtain VSOs for their vehicles.

VSOs will be issued on a per type and per operator basis, covering the relevant vehicles in that operator's fleet. So if an operator has some vehicles suitable for VSO Type 1 and others suitable for VSO Type 2, they will be issued with two VSOs, one to cover each of the relevant vehicles.

To apply for a VSO, please send an email to [Michael.hepworth@vca.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.hepworth@vca.gov.uk), marking the application as in relation to concrete pumps, with the following items of information for each of the vehicles in your fleet to which you wish the VSO to apply:

- Vehicle Make
- Vehicle Model
- Registration Number
- Vehicle Identification Number
- Number of axles
- Type 1 or Type 2 VSO requested