Vehicle Standards Guide 22 (VSG-22)

Requirements for tag trailers

Introduction

Amendments to the Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation (the MDL Regulation), scheduled to commence in July 2018, will introduce ‘tag trailers’ as a new type of semitrailer. This guide provides heavy vehicle owners and operators with an understanding of:

- how to determine if a heavy trailer should be categorised as a tag trailer under the MDL Regulation
- the applicable operating requirements for tag trailers under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL).

Note: Low loader, platform and other semitrailers that may have a drawbar and are equipped with a king pin, were never intended to be classed as tag trailers. The operating conditions of these trailer types remain unchanged.

How to determine the trailer type

The HVNL describes three main (typical) types of heavy trailers: dog, pig and semitrailers. These types of trailers may then be combined or have physical or load carrying characteristics that result in further refinement of their standard definition.

A typical dog trailer has an axle or group at the front that is steered by connection to a towing vehicle by a drawbar and an axle or group at the rear of its load carrying surface.

A typical pig trailer has a single axle or an axle group near the middle of its load carrying surface and is connected to the towing vehicle by a drawbar.

A typical tag trailer is a type of semitrailer that has a single axle or axle group towards the rear of its load carrying surface and is connected to the towing vehicle by a rigid drawbar.

Note: The HVNL recognises other variations of trailer types (for example, low loader, agricultural trailer, pole type trailer and the new tag trailer). However, these variations are considered sub-categories of one of the three main types.
How to determine the relevant position of the axle or axle group

To determine if the axle or axle group is located near the middle or towards the rear of the load carrying surface, divide the length of the load carrying surface equally into thirds. The relevant position of the axle group will then determine the type of trailer, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Trailer type based on position of axle/axle group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trailer type</th>
<th>Relevant position of axle/axle group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pig trailer</td>
<td>If the centre-line of the axle or axle group falls in the front or middle third of the load carrying surface, the trailer is considered to be a pig trailer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semitrailer or a tag trailer</td>
<td>If the centre-line of the axle or axle group falls in the rear third of the load carrying surface, the trailer is considered to be a semitrailer or a tag trailer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog trailer</td>
<td>If the trailer has an axle or axle group in both the front and rear thirds of the load surface, the trailer may be considered a dog trailer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: If a trailer has axles distributed in a way that is not described in Table 1, it is not mentioned in this document (e.g. this would apply mostly to oversize overmass (OSOM) platform type trailers).

Mass limits for tag trailers

The MDL Regulation prescribes the mass requirements for heavy vehicles. The prescribed mass limits for an axle or axle group applicable to a tag trailer, are the same as those applicable to a semitrailer.

Note: The centre-line of a single axle or axle group is defined as the rear overhang line described in Schedule 6 of the MDL Regulation.

Maximum towed mass ratio of 1:1

Under the MDL Regulation, a new requirement will soon be introduced that will limit a combination of a heavy vehicle and a tag trailer to operate at a maximum towed mass ratio of 1:1. The 1:1 mass ratio does not allow a trailer to exceed the manufacturer’s mass limits or applicable prescribed axle mass limits. This means that when in combination, the operating axle mass/es of a tag trailer must not be more than the total axle mass of the towing vehicle or the lowest rated component in the combination. The MDL regulations state that these requirements also apply to dog and pig trailers.

Note: The 1:1 towed mass ratio does not apply to:
- a semitrailer that is not a tag trailer
- a trailer (e.g. a dog trailer) operating under a notice that permits a higher towed mass ratio.

More information on general mass limits (GML) can be found on the NHVR website.