

Aggregate & Ready Mix Association of Minnesota



Six-axle trucks like this cause less wear and tear on county roads than five-axle trucks. More axles add braking power, too.

What is ESAL?
Pavement engineers use the concept of an equivalent single-axle load (ESAL) to measure the effects of heavy vehicles on pavement. A five-axle truck weighing 80,000 pounds is equivalent to about 2.4 ESALS. A six-axle truck at 90,000 pounds has an ESAL value of only 2.0, because its weight is distributed over six axles instead of five.

Source: 2006 MnDOT report for Minnesota Truck Size and Weight Project.

Congressman Tim Walz recently endorsed SF1213 in a letter to State Senator Scott Dibble, saying that "increasing truck weights will allow Minnesota companies to more effectively compete and integrate within the region while respecting the safety on the road."

Legislation introduced for all-inclusive truck weights law

Frazee City Administrator Jonathan Smith was approached by a national manufacturing and distribution company early in 2012. It wanted to build a \$60 million distribution center because the town had everything the company desired: Highway 10, a railroad line, 100 acres of available property, aggregate and timber, and plenty of hard-working Minnesotans. For Smith, it was like manna from heaven.

"The economic impact for us could be huge because the company could bring 200-300 jobs to a town of 1500 people," said Smith. "We would more than double our tax base."

It was a win-win situation until they were stopped in their tracks by Minnesota's truck weights law. The distributor discovered he'd have to pay a lot more for trucking goods from our state than from North Dakota, just 45 minutes from Frazee. Minnesota limits his trucks to carrying 80,000 pounds of products, North Dakota to 105,500 pounds.

"How fast and how cheap you can ship goods is the only thing that gives these big national manufacturers-distributors a competitive advantage," Smith said he learned. "Despite all the things we offered, it still makes more sense for them to choose North Dakota."

Smith isn't giving up and the company hasn't made a final decision yet. He is an ardent advocate for SF1213, a bill now in play in the legislature that his

state senator, Rod Skoe (DFL-Clearbrook), introduced. The bill proposes an increase to 90,000 pounds for six-axle truck configurations, and 97,000 for seven-axle truck configurations with permits on 10-ton state and local roads. The equivalent HF1480 was introduced by Rep. Zachery Dorholt, DFL - St. Cloud.

The members of the Aggregate and Ready Mix Association of Minnesota endorse SF1213 and HF1480 as well.

ARM Member John Bornhoft, President of Buffalo Ridge Concrete in southwestern Minnesota, described the benefits of hauling an additional four or five tons of aggregates.

"You'd have the same truck, the same driver, the same amount of fuel, and the same trip time and equipment so your efficiencies go up dramatically," said Bornhoft. "Fewer trips and the cost savings make us more competitive."

Jerry Lang, vice president and general manager of Knife River's North Central Region office in Sauk Rapids, pointed to other benefits of fewer truck trips and more axles.

"When trucks can carry more tons on more axles, that means the impact on the roads will decrease," said Lang. "It would have a huge impact for outstate companies."

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From the ARM President

In 2004, my family purchased Brink Sand, Gravel and Redi-Mix, a neighbor in one of our aggregate sources. Brink had been a member of ARM for many years. Prior to 2004, Hawkinson had no experience with ready mix concrete nor experience with producing aggregate for concrete. We chose to join ARM as Brink had.

I attended a couple networking opportunities our first season as a member, including the annual convention. Starting then and continuing today, the owners and managers I have networked with through ARM have been the most valuable advantage to membership. There have been other advantages, too, that our company and other companies have capitalized on. The work that ARM has put into aggregate permitting and industrial permitting has been essential to our industry. ARM also has lobbied extensively for numerous improvements in MnDOT specifications and testing on behalf of ready mix and aggregate producers.

In the future, ARM will continue to advocate for our industry through education, lobbying and leadership. Currently, ARM is working on truck weight increases that could lower our production costs. ARM also is working to help MnDOT develop an improved "spall" specification that will impact many projects producers supply concrete for. ARM and its members will continue to push for measurable improvements to our industry, and we will continue to challenge undesirable changes implemented by different state agencies.

As the economy slowly strengthens, we need to work diligently to increase the number of producer and associate members. Please feel free to contact me, ARM Executive Director Fred Corrigan or ARM Board Member Larry Nelson with leads. Thank you for your continued membership and support.

Paul Hawkinson, Hawkinson Construction, Grand Rapids

Mine reclamation video a public service project



Knife River mined this Ottertail County site in 2009 for a road project.



Knife River reclaimed and put back the site to farm production in 2011.

Minnesotans and their public officials don't know much about mine reclamation and doubt aggregate producers care about the local environment. ARM has a new initiative to educate them about the myriad ways producers have historically reclaimed land and partnered with local nonprofits, public agencies and conservationists to do so.

ARM is assembling photos and stories about aggregate mine reclamation projects to create a video. Members soon will be able to send public officials and citizens to the video on the ARM website. This first-of-its kind video will be a tremendous service to Minnesota and tap into the experience of aggregate producers who mine throughout the state. We need your before-and-after photos and if you don't have any, take them in 2013 and send them to us.

If you have questions or projects to share, please e-mail Renee McGivern at sparkplugconsulting@gmail.com.

Q&A

Houston Engineering Inc.

This ARM associate member is a full service engineering firm with offices throughout the upper Midwest. We talked to Larry Kramka, Environmental Service Sector Lead, for insight about environmental permitting.

How does HEI help navigate environmental review and permitting?

The single most important aspect of a project in environmental review and permitting is a clear and concise project description. A well conceived and written description will provide a backstop for decision-makers for what issues should (and should not) be included in the environmental review process. The project description becomes the basis for how everyone will talk about the project.

How people talk about the project matters in permitting?

Yes. An age-old method employed by the police when interviewing a suspect is to be silent. Eventually a suspect begins to fill the silence, often giving details that are incriminating. Development projects have a similar nature where silence is concerned. Projects that are not well defined are often met with creative storytelling by opponents. HEI carefully listens and defines the needs and goals of the proposer and the community, filling the “silence” with a clear story.

Aren't the regulatory constraints defined for our project?

Often the simplest answer is yes. However, HEI has found that even the obvious aspects of permitting are not absolute so it's important to review each project to ensure there are no surprises. The project description ensures that decision-makers are able to identify the scope of their regulatory reach as they craft permit conditions.

For more information about HEI, contact Larry Kramka at 763-493-4522, lkramka@houstoneng.com.

Weigh-Rite facts about truck scales

- Most are 70' long and 10' wide; 11' is becoming more popular so drivers can exit the truck and walk on the scale.
- 120,000 - 200,000 capacity to weigh hundreds of trucks each day.
- 80-90% of new scales are above ground; pit versions cost more and collect water, and that speeds rust problems.
- Older scales had mechanical levers under the deck with a dial or weightbeam to show the weight until 20-30 years ago. Current models are electronic with load cells under the concrete or steel deck.
- The average useful life is 10-20 years depending on level of use.
- More and more scales are becoming unattended and connected to the office via ethernet and cameras.

For more information, contact Dave Vail, Weigh-Rite Scale at 651-295-6639 or dvail@scalesguy.com.



Truck weights article (continued)

A 2006 report of the Minnesota Truck Size and Weight Project of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) agreed with Lang's assertion: Additional truck axles and fewer truck trips will result in less pavement wear. An increase in the number of axles actually reduces the impact on pavement (the ESALS value).

The report also stated that fewer truck trips would mean a slight improvement in safety. SF1213 and HF1480 use many of the recommendations from the 2006 MnDOT report.

A final reason for increasing truck weights limits is that the current law is replete with exceptions and exemptions for farm crops and timber, and makes the law hard to enforce: The State Patrol can't easily tell if a truck is hauling corn, soy beans, or gravel.

Lang of Knife River is looking forward to a truck weights solution in Minnesota.

"It'd be the best of all worlds if this truck weights legislation would put us on par with other states and cover everyone under the same weights limits," said Lang.



ARM Member West Houle of Metro Gravel in Newport says many counties have put a nine-ton limit on roads that were built for 10 or more tons. He'd like to see that change so he can haul aggregates using the most direct routes to his customers via county roads. He said it will be safer than using local streets.