

***Can a 35,000-lb. farm vehicle, which is exempt from the overweight permitting requirements, use a covered bridge that is posted at 10,000 lbs?***

No. Weight limitations for covered bridges are strictly enforced and there are no exemptions. Vermont's covered bridges receive heightened protection due to fact that they are widely recognized as important cultural, economic, educational, aesthetic, and historic resources.

Excluding the use of covered bridges, farm vehicles may be exempt from weight limits on certain bridges. Farm vehicles may be permitted to operate on the highways and bridges of the municipality in excess of weight and size limits only after receiving an overweight permit from the local municipality. 24 V.S.A. § 1400a. "A farm tractor or a farm trailer shall be exempt from the [overweight vehicle] permit requirements of [24 V.S.A.] sections 1400 and 1400a." 23 V.S.A. § 370. Therefore, a bridge which is posted for 24,000 lbs. may still be used by a 35,000 lb. farm harvesting machine, as long as the owner has made an application for a permit to the appropriate local legislative body. The permit received under this guise is not valid for covered bridges.

Covered bridges receive heightened protection. Selectboards have the authority to "restrict the use of the bridge to vehicles which are within limits as to weight, height and width." 19 V.S.A. § 313. With this authority, selectboards may post the restrictions for the covered bridges and ensure that there are signs posted for the most direct, alternate, unrestricted route. Combining the factors of an unrestricted, alternate route, and the importance placed on these cultural resources, covered bridges will be protected from all overweight vehicles to ensure their structural integrity and preserve these cultural resources for future generations.

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