

TRUCK WEIGHING

With the birth of the automobile dawned the era of highway improvement. Motorists demanded smooth, well engineered highways, which brought about the expenditure of millions in highway improvement. The main points confronting highway engineers at the time was the elimination of dust to road users and highway surface wear. Due to congestion and increased rates by the various railroad companies, commerce moved to transporting commodities by truck. This demand increased the production of bigger and better trucks capable of more and heavier loads.

The roadways beneath these heavy loads were ground to powder or ploughed into deep ruts in just a few months. Complaints to the State Legislature resulted in the passage of a bill permitting a maximum weight of 800 pounds per inch of tire. Sponsored by Senator Mortimer Y. Ferris, the law also provided that specific measurements be met. A maximum width of 8 feet and height of 12 feet 6 inches were established. Highway Commissioner Frederick Stewart Greene gave troopers the task of enforcing the new law.

It was useless to stop trucks unless their weight could be proven by use of a nearby scale. The 1920 invention of the loadometer permitted a truck to be weighed wherever it was stopped. The loadometer worked on the principle of a combined auto jack, scale and register. The jack not only lifted the truck, but also registered the weight on the register. Lifting the truck completely off the ground would give the trucks total weight.

The original truck weighing detail consisted of a four-man crew with each crew consisting of two troopers and two Highway Department employees. The army provided four used, repainted ambulances to carry the new loadometers. The legend "Traffic Law Enforcement - New York State Department of Highways and State Police" was painted on the side of the truck.

On July 14, 1920, Sergeant Rudolph Panzlau, Troopers O'Neil and Murphy were assigned to the truck weighing detail. They worked in co-operation with the State Department of Highways using a machine which weighed trucks called the loadometer. All trucks were stopped that did not meet requirements and were warned to properly equip their trucks or arrests and fines would follow. Maximum loads for trucks were 25,000 pounds. Trucks could only be eight feet wide and 12 ½ feet high. They could not carry more than 800 pounds to inch of tire width. The machine was built especially to weigh trucks and was used in each troop for one week at a time, then sent to another troop. It was first used in Troop "A" at Rochester, N.Y., then on Route 5 between Leroy and Caledonia, N.Y. and again, between Batavia and Buffalo, N.Y.

Tpr. Jacques Stickney

Tprs. Gerry Fenclau - Gerald Brakefield

Tpr. Robert Vishian

Tpr. Brian Burke

Tpr. Brian Burke

END

In 1934, special squads under the direction of headquarters were initiated for the enforcement of laws relating to trucks and buses, particularly overloads. Equipment and a specially designated truck were operated in conjunction with patrols from each troop. A total of 7,716 trucks were checked with 912 charged with being overloaded and 1265 other violations cited. 230 buses were checked with only 20 equipment violations noted.

As an aid to the motoring public, 1934 Legislation was passed requiring trucks and buses to carry emergency lighting to be used in the event of breakdown or lighting failure while moving.

On August 6, 1934, Harry Dutchy of Barker, N.Y. was fined \$3.00 when he pled guilty in Batavia City Court to having over twenty tons of sand on his truck. This was six tons more than the law allowed.

Attention was continued with enforcement toward overloaded trucks being first on the agenda because of the heavy damage caused to the states highways. It was noted that the attitude of truck drivers had improved toward this enforcement with only 266 overload violations found from 10,517 trucks checked. The enforcement of inadequate brakes was stepped up with the purchase of nine decelerometers distributed among the six troops to test automobile, bus, truck and pleasure cars.

In January 1937, New York State Legislation went into effect limiting the hours of operation for truck drivers. Known as the ten-hour law, it was enacted because too many truck drivers stayed at the wheel until exhausted resulting in accidents. The law provided that a truck driver could not drive more than 10 hours in any period of 14 hours. The driver was considered on duty, when he reported to his terminal for duty and was not off duty until he left his truck. Rest periods and meals taken were allowed to take up the four-hour allowance. At the end of fourteen hours, the driver had to be relieved or off duty. The driver could not remain in the truck during his off time, which effectively did away with the use of bunks in trucks provided to many long distance haulers. A driving record was required to be maintained by each driver providing location and time left; destination and time arrived with rest times noted. Truckers lobbied that the law was unfair in that required rest stops were not practical and perishables had to be delivered as quickly as possible. The law had not yet been enforced, when methods of evasion to avoid arrest were being discussed which included a second set of driver records and identifying a second driver, as a hitchhiker.

Until 1939, the state police only had one loadometer truck equipped with loadometer scales, brake testing decelerometers and associated equipment that operated intermittently throughout the state. In the year 1939, 25,862 trucks and buses were inspected resulting in 1,372 arrests for faulty equipment. A second truck was procured to continue effective commercial vehicle enforcement.

During July 1943, Technical Sergeant David Soule, 38, Tribes Hill, N.Y. in charge of a truck-weighing machine that was transported throughout the state, was arrested and charged with bribery. It was alleged that between September 3 and September 25, 1942, Soule's accepted \$1,500.00 in bribes from Earl C. Stacks, a C & E Trucking Official, Rhinebeck, N.Y. and Robert Holmes of Hudson, N.Y. to permit the operation of overloaded trucks on state highways. He was found guilty after trial on October 15, 1943 and sentenced to a term of 5 to 10 years in Sing-Sing Prison. Stacks was found guilty of bribery and sentenced to a 2 ½ to 5 years suspended sentence.