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CHAPTER 6 – Emergency Moves

600 General Information

600.1 Emergency Defined

California Law makes special provisions to accommodate the movement of vehicles and/or loads when responding to and returning from an "emergency." The California Vehicle Code (CVC) Division 15, Section 35002(c), defines an emergency as "...a condition that poses an imminent threat of loss of property or a hazard to life, as determined by the public agency charged with responsibility to respond thereto."

Issuances of emergency permits to utility and railroad entities have the same process as issuance of emergency permits to public agencies if the emergency fits the definition above. These entities are subject to the same provisions applicable to public agencies.

600.2 Special Provisions

Special provisions made by the CVC and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) regarding emergency movement are discussed below.

A. CVC Exemption:

California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 35002 exempts certain vehicles from the size and weight requirement of Division 15 as follows:

1. CVC 35002(a)(1) & (2) refers to authorized emergency vehicles, as defined in CVC 165, and provides an exception that is applicable at all times.

   This includes fire trucks and any other vehicles that can legally operate with red lights and sirens and does not require any action on the part of Caltrans.

2. Section (c) refers to those vehicles that are not authorized emergency vehicles, but are used during emergencies, and provides a limited exemption for their movement.

This includes any other "...vehicle owned, operated, or rented by a public agency that is being used in responding to or returning from an emergency ..." The statute continues by authorizing the transporter to "operate as required, if a reasonable effort is first made...to obtain verbal permission..." The statute also provides "...when the vehicle is returning from the site of the emergency, ...either obtains a permit at the location of the emergency or makes a reasonable effort to obtain verbal permission..., and obtains a written permit for that use... not later than three days after the date of the emergency."

B. Caltrans Special Provisions:

Emergency moves are exempt from the following Caltrans' extralegal policies:

- Hours and time of move
- Prohibited moves on red routes
- Weekend moves

Other Caltrans' extralegal policies must be considered when comparing the equipment size and the requested route, and waived where necessary. Whenever normal permit policy is waived in order to move a large vehicle and/or load to the emergency, the need for pilot cars and California Highway Patrol (CHP) escort shall be considered. When appropriate, pilot cars and/or CHP escort shall be required. No permitted extralegal vehicles and/or loads are authorized to exceed bridge permit load rating capacity.

601 Emergency Permit Procedures

Authorization for emergency movement shall be made by Caltrans through the issuance of a Single-Trip permit or verbal authorization according to the emergency permit procedures described in this section. Notification of an emergency will normally come to Caltrans from the responsible public agency declaring the emergency, which may include a utility and/or railroad entity applying for an emergency permit.

601.1 Notification of Emergency

Responsibilities of the emergency move applicant:

- Reasonable effort must be made to notify the Caltrans' Transportation Permits Issuance Branch (permits office) prior to the extralegal vehicle and/or load movement. See CVC 35002(c).
- Notification of an emergency will normally come to Caltrans from the responsible public agency declaring the emergency, which may include a utility and/or railroad entity applying for an emergency permit.
- When requesting emergency permits from Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (regular office hours), the Caltrans' permits office shall be contacted directly. The phone number to contact Caltrans is listed in Section 602.
- After 5:00 p.m. and before 8:00 a.m., the Caltrans' Headquarters (HQ) Communications Center shall be contacted so they can contact the on-call permit writer. The phone number to contact Caltrans is listed in Section 602.

Once contacted by a permit writer, the applicant shall provide the following information:

- Applicant's name.
- Name of the agency or entity requesting the emergency move.
- Nature of the emergency.
- Name of all contact persons and their telephone numbers.
- Type of hauling equipment, configuration, and load description.
- Dimensions and requested weights.
- Location of the emergency and the routes intended to use.

601.2 Verifying the Emergency

The Caltrans permit writer shall call back the agency or entity declaring the emergency and verify the authenticity of the emergency. If the permit writer is unable to contact the agency or entity declaring the emergency, the permit writer will issue a Single-Trip permit or verbal authorization if in their judgment the emergency conforms to the definition as stated in Section 600.1. After issuing the permit or verbal authorization, the permit writer follows up on verifying the emergency. If the permit or verbal authorization was issued and there was no emergency declared by an agency or entity, the hauling company will be reported to Caltrans' Transportation Permits, Policies, and Compliance Branch, and the hauler will receive permit violation points in accordance with Chapter 7, Section 704.

601.3 Single-Trip Permit

If an emergency permit is requested during regular office hours, every effort shall be made to issue a Single-Trip permit to the applicant. The Single-Trip permit will be issued in accordance with all current permit policies, procedures, and exceptions as stated in Section 600.2.

601.4 Verbal Authorization

If an emergency permit is requested after regular office hours, the Caltrans' HQ Communications Center shall be contacted by the applicant. An emergency move may occur with a verbal authorization from an on-call permit writer or permits office manager.

601.5 Responsibilities of the Caltrans' HQ Communications Center

When the HQ Communications Center is notified, their representative will contact the on-call permit writer from the permits office. The HQ Communications Center will maintain the contact information (phone numbers) for all on-call permit writers and managers from the permits office.

601.6 Responsibilities of the Emergency On-call Permit Writer

When processing the permit, the on-call permit writer should:

- Note all details relative to the emergency move, hauling equipment, load, loaded dimensions, weight, origin, destination, routes, and route restrictions.

- Make a reasonable effort to verify the authenticity of the emergency as per Section 601.2.
- Verify the adequacy of the requested route.
- Approve a Single-Trip permit application or provide a verbal authorization for the move.
- Notify the CHP's Communications Center that an extralegal vehicle and/or load was given a verbal authorization to move. Relay pertinent information about the transporter, route, load, time of move, movement during inclement weather, and any other information.
- File the verbal authorization information form with the permits office for use as reference when the Single-Trip permit application is submitted.
- Process the Single-Trip permit application for the emergency move that was given the verbal authorization previously.

Note: If verbal authorization is given, the applicant must still obtain a Single-Trip permit from the permits office within three (3) business days of the emergency as stated in CVC 35002(c). The permits office must retain a copy of the application for the use in assessment if there are any infrastructure damage. The permit will be issued by the permit writer giving the verbal approval.

601.7 Return Trip

On the return trip, the permit will be issued in accordance with all current permit policies and procedures (i.e. may not cross bridges that do not have the capacity for the load moved, travel with pilot cars, etc.). The public agency returning from the site of the emergency is liable for any damage to state highways and structures as per CVC 35002(d). A return trip permitted under verbal authorization requires the public agency to obtain a transportation permit within three (3) business days as required by CVC 35002(c). A permit for a return trip will be processed using the same procedure as the Single-Trip permit issued to the emergency. Verification of the emergency is not required for return trip permits.

601.8 Enforcement

Caltrans and CHP have permit and enforcement policies for emergency moves. CHP enforcement policies are contained in the Highway Patrol Manual, Section 82.6. CHP has enforcement policy to respond to verbal authorizations and may take enforcement action as necessary. CVC 35002 provides for the movement of extralegal vehicles and/or loads during an emergency, but the statute does not exempt carriers from CVC 35783 when written permits are issued.

602 Emergency Permit Phone Numbers

To obtain emergency permits from Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (regular office hours), the permits office shall be contacted. To obtain emergency permits outside regular office hours from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., the Caltrans' HQ Communications Center shall be contacted.

CALTRANS' TRANSPORTATION PERMITS ISSUANCE BRANCH (PERMITS OFFICE)

Phone Number: (916) 322-1297

CALTRANS' HEADQUARTERS COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Phone Number: (916) 653-3442

The on-call permit writer will notify the CHP dispatch center of the pending move with a verbal authorization.

CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Sacramento Dispatch Center

Phone Number: (916) 861-1300

Fax Number: (916) 861-1346