

2010 WINTER CHAIN ADVISORY

When the snow begins to fall or ice begins to accumulate, it's a good idea to know how the state you're trucking through regulates the use of tire chains and travel during winter events

By Jaml Jones
senior editor

The winter of 2009 was one for the record books. Even if snowfall amounts didn't surpass previous records, the lengthy list of new snowfall terminology was definitely one for the ages.

With some areas suffering the fallout from "Snow-mageddon," to others digging out from their "Snow-namis," regulations restricting winter travel popped up in some new areas.

Every year, we plow through the state laws and regulations of the Lower 48 and bring you a comprehensive roundup, delivered in *Land Line's* trusted plain-speak way, of all the chain laws. This year, we went a step further and included how states may restrict your travel during winter snow and ice emergencies.

The online version of this article can be found on landlinemag.com with links to all of the state regulations and laws cited in this roundup.

While every effort has been made to make sure this list is 100 percent complete, if you are in doubt at all, check with the state department of transportation or check in at the first scale you come to. A few minutes of being safe is a lot better than being sorry with a few hundred dollars' worth of fines later.

California

California does not require trucks to carry chains during any specified time period. When the weather hits, though, it takes at least eight chains for a standard tractor-trailer configuration to comply with the regulations.

Chains or cables?

Conventional tire chains and cable chains, as well as other less conventional devices such as "Spikes Spiders," are permitted. Trucks with cable-type chains are legal, but may be restricted at times because of severe conditions – which can happen commonly in the higher elevations.

Placement

Eight total. On the tractor, four chains must be on all four tires of the main drive axle. Two more chains are required on the outside tires of the second drive axle. You have options on the placement of two more required chains on the trailer axles. Chains can be placed on the

Port of L.A. wins round in lawsuit; ATA plans to file appeal

By Charlie Morasch
staff writer

A federal judge ruled in favor of the Port of Los Angeles Clean Truck Program in August, but the American Trucking Associations has said it plans to appeal the latest in a two-year legal battle.

In 2008, the ports of L.A. and Long Beach each approved a Clean Truck Program that banned pre-1989 trucks in 2009. By 2012, only trucks meeting 2007 emissions standards will be allowed at the ports.

Los Angeles' program required employee truck drivers. It also included expensive taxi-style "concessionaire" fees, prompting a July 2008 lawsuit by ATA to overturn portions of the program. The lawsuit has bounced between U.S. District Court in Los Angeles and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

In August, U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder ruled in favor of the port, including the employee-driver provision and other requirements. Snyder said the Port is acting as a market participant and, as such, is not subject to laws that pre-empt states or municipalities from regulating trucking.

While Los Angeles has sought to regulate drayage drivers, it hasn't regulated long-haul trucking. The port worked with OOIDA to create a day pass system that allows trucks engaged in long-haul to bypass the system.

"We have always appreciated the fact that Los Angeles and Long Beach aren't attempting to regulate long-haul trucking," said OOIDA Executive Vice President Todd Spencer. "However, the ports should recognize, as should large motor carriers, that if truckers were fairly compensated, we wouldn't be having this conversation. Truckers are nickel and dimed to death and therefore can't keep up with truck payments or repairs."

OOIDA has objected to expensive fees for port access and has pointed out underlying problems at ports beyond the scope of the Clean Truck Program.

Spencer said federal leasing requirements and maintenance requirements have been ignored by carriers at the ports.

"What has evolved is a very dysfunctional system that hasn't helped safety or the environment," Spencer said. "That won't be changed by simply throwing millions of dollars of tax money at it or by changing the status of drivers from owner-operators to employees."

By spring 2010, Los Angeles alone had racked up \$8 million in legal bills.

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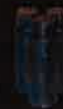
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outside of either axle or staggered with one chain on the outside of each axle.

Remember, while inside tires of duals are not usually required to be chained, CalTrans can require chains on the inside duals if conditions are bad enough.

Route specific

Chains are most often required in the higher mountain passes of northern California, such as:

- I-5 north of Redding;
- I-80 over Donner Pass between Sacramento and Reno, NV; and
- U.S. Highway 50 over Echo Summit between Lake Tahoe and Sacramento.

Chains are sometimes required on:

- State Route 58 near Tehachapi between Bakersfield and Mojave;
- I-15 over Cajon Pass between Victorville and San Bernardino; and
- I-5 over Tejon Pass between Los Angeles and Bakersfield.

However, snow can fall unseasonably at higher elevations at many locations within California. Chains may be required at any time at these higher elevations when conditions warrant.

Colorado

Colorado's chain law applies to every state highway, federal highway and interstate in the state. The chain law is in effect when drivers are notified by roadside signs. Truckers need chains for the four tires of the drive axle to be in compliance when it's time to throw iron. There is no requirement to carry extra chains or cables.

The Colorado law changed a bit in 2007. Now, truckers traveling specifically on I-70 between mile marker 163 in Edwards County and mile marker 259 in Morrison County must carry sufficient chains to be in

Inevitably, every year after the "winter chain advisory" prints in the October book, a reader or two run into a snag in Colorado.

So, to put the matter to rest once and for all – here's a letter received from the Colorado DOT explaining the reg and enforcement.

"I got some clarification so hopefully I can explain this clearly through e-mail. It is correct to say that commercial vehicles must carry chains on only I-70 between MM 163 and MM 259 between Sept. 1 and May 31 as this is the only segment in which drivers can be fined during an inspection.

"If a commercial vehicle is inspected in any other location when the chain law is not in place, they cannot be fined for not carrying chains. However, if the chain law is in place and the commercial vehicle is not chained up in that specific location, they will be fined.

"The bottom line is that drivers can only be fined for not carrying chains on I-70 between MM 163 and 259, but can be fined throughout Colorado for not chaining up when the chain law is in effect. Thus, it is best to carry chains at all times to avoid any type of fine."

compliance from Sept. 1 through May 31. If you get busted without chains on this stretch of road, you will be fined \$50 plus a \$17 surcharge.

And, if you violate Colorado's chain law, you'd better be ready to pay. You can be fined \$500, plus a \$157 surcharge, for not putting on chains when required. If you block the roadway because you didn't throw iron when the law was in effect, you can be dinged with a \$1,000 fine, plus a \$313 surcharge.

There are two levels of the chain law:

- Level 1, Code 17 – Single drive axle, combination commercial vehicles must chain up all four drive tires. Cables are not allowed in this instance. All other commercial vehicles must have either snow tires or chains to proceed.
- Level 2, Code 18 – Chains are required for all commercial vehicles. Again, all four tires of single-drive tractors must be chained. For dual-drive axle tractors, you're only required to chain four drive tires. Outside tires of drive axles must have chains. Inside tires may have cables.

Chains or cables?

- Chains, as well as wheel sanders – which carry enough sand to negotiate a hill – and pneumatically driven chains are allowed. Cables are allowed in some scenarios – such as on trailers and on the inside tires of dual-drive axles.

The Colorado regulations actually give the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Highway Patrol the power to dictate when chain laws go into effect. The regulations only address design and placement.

Connecticut

Cables and chains are permitted only from Nov. 15 through April 30. No minimum number of chains are outlined in the regulations.

Delaware

Here's another state that permits the use of tire chains "for safety because of snow, ice or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to slide or skid."

The governor recently signed a bill into law that allows state officials to restrict travel on highways during

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emergency situations. Officials have three different levels of bans to choose from. A Level I ban encourages extreme caution when traveling roadways and advises that non-essential travel be avoided. A Level II ban permits travel only by emergency vehicles, essential government personnel, health care providers and vehicles carrying food and fuel. A Level III ban restricts travel to only emergency vehicles and essential employees such as snowplow operators. The Level III ban also prohibits retaliation by employers against employees complying with the travel ban.

Idaho

Officials in Idaho can determine, at any time, that Lookout Pass or Fourth of July Pass on I-90 or Lolo Pass on Highway 12 are unsafe, either individually or as a group. If that happens, signs will alert you to chain up.

If the alert is in effect, you will have to chain up a minimum of one tire on each side of drive axles and one axle at or near the rear of each trailer.

On a side note, studs are prohibited between May 1 and Sept. 30

Kentucky

There are no specific dates for the use of tire chains or how many must be used. However, the state is painstakingly specific about the type of chains that are permitted.

Here's the exact language from the Kentucky statute: "Where chains are used on rubber-tired vehicles, the cross chains shall be not more than three-fourths (3/4) of an inch in thickness or diameter, and shall be spaced not more than 10 inches apart, around the circumference of the tires."

Maryland

The Maryland regulations can be a bit misleading. In one section of the regulations, the state has the boilerplate language permitting the use of snow chains.

However, elsewhere in the regs it is stated that chains may be required in Maryland if a snow emergency is declared. Snow emergencies can be declared for individual roads or statewide. Travel – other than for motorcycles – is prohibited on any highway that is designated and appropriately signposted as a vehicle emergency route ... for which a snow emergency has been declared and is in effect, unless the vehicle is

equipped with chains or snow tires on at least one wheel at each end of a drive axle.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts prohibits the use of chains between May 1 and Nov. 1 without a permit. It should be noted that commercial vehicles can be ordered off the roadways during "snow emergencies."

Michigan

Chains, of "reasonable proportion," can be used for safety because of snow, ice or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to skid. However, guidance provided by the state says that if chains are used, "the chain must not come in contact with the road."

Missouri

There are no laws on the books mandating or prohibiting the use of chains when the roads are covered with snow or ice. However, a Missouri Highway Patrol Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division spokesman did caution that chains should be properly fitted and installed correctly to prevent damage to the truck and roads.

Montana

The chain law goes into effect when roadside signs tell all drivers to chain up. The state's requirement when the law is in effect is for all "driver wheels of one axle" to be chained up. So, for a dual axle tractor, it will mean keeping four chains on hand for when the law is in effect.

If you need them

Nevada

There aren't specific dates for chain laws to be in effect. Again, roadside signs will let you know when chaining up is required. In Nevada, truckers will need to chain at least two wheels on the main drive axle. You are also required to chain the "braking wheels of any trailing vehicle in a combination of vehicles."

New Jersey

New Jersey goes a little beyond the standard "chains are permitted when needed" directive. The state allows chains of reasonable proportions when roads, streets and highways are slippery, because of rain, snow, ice, oil, manner of construction or other reason.

However, "no chains shall be used at any time on improved highways when highway conditions do not make such use necessary for the safety of life or property." Also, New Jersey prohibits the use of chains "likely to be thrown so as to endanger any person or property."

New York

If New York officials, either state or local, post a route as a snow emergency route, all vehicles traveling on it will be required to have snow tires and/or chains. There are no specifics in the regs mandating the number of chains or placement.

Oregon

Oregon's law applies to all highways in the state. Signs will tell you when you are required to carry chains and when you are required to use them. You will need to have six chains on hand to comply in Oregon.

Placement

Again, you have a few options for which tires you are required to chain on the tractor, so here goes:

- A tandem-drive axle tractor must

Most states allow you to use chains if you need them. There is regulatory language consistent among several states that says you can use chains "of reasonable proportions ... upon any vehicle when required for safety because of snow, ice, or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to skid."

States that have regulations expressly allowing the use of chains, but do not regulate their use beyond allowing them for safety are:

Alabama	Nebraska
Arizona	New Mexico
Arkansas	North Carolina
Georgia	North Dakota
Illinois	Ohio
Indiana	Oklahoma
Iowa	Rhode Island
Kansas	South Carolina
Louisiana	Texas
Minnesota	West Virginia
Mississippi	Wisconsin

In general, states don't want you running chains on bare roads. But if you need them for safety because the roads are covered with snow or ice, you'll probably be OK to run them.

These states do not have regulations allowing or prohibiting the use of chains: **Florida, Maine, Missouri and New Hampshire.**

have chains on two tires on each side of the primary drive axle (in other words, all four tires of the main axle); or

- If both axles are powered, one tire on each side of each drive axle (again, four chains total required; you just don't have to chain the inside tires).

Now on the trailer, here's the deal:

- Chains must also be placed on two tires, one on each side, of any axle on the trailer. (So the outside wheel of one axle is

chained on one side of the trailer, and the outside wheel of the other axle is chained on the other side.)

Pennsylvania

Another emergency snow route state here. If officials declare a snow emergency route when the roadway is covered with ice or snow, only vehicles with snow tires or "tire chains on two tires on a driven axle" may proceed.

South Dakota

The South Dakota DOT has the authority to restrict travel on roads. Signs will alert you to these restrictions. Tire chains or "sufficient traction devices" are allowed. You don't have to wait for the signs to tell you to put on your chains. Chains are also permitted if conditions tending to cause a skid are present.

Tennessee

Tennessee sends mixed signals with its regulations. In one reg, it says that it is "permissible" to use snow chains when conditions warrant. Elsewhere, the Volunteer State requires that every truck "likely to encounter" conditions carry at least one set of chains.

So to be safe, you might want to have a couple of chains on board.

Utah

The Utah DOT has the authority to restrict highway travel to vehicles either running chains or at least having them in your possession. However, Utah requirements do not expressly state how many chains or on what tires they are to be installed.

Vermont

Vermont has a "traffic committee" that will decide if use of chains will be required. The reg mandates that the

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“advance notice shall be given to the traveling public through signage and, whenever possible, through public service announcements.” This language also mandates that adequate space be provided to chain up.

The regulation does not outline the required number or placement of chains.

Washington

Chains must be carried Nov. 1 through April 1. It takes five chains to comply with the requirement. However, all vehicles of more than 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight must carry two extra chains for use in the event that road conditions require the use of more chains or in the event that chains in use are broken or otherwise made useless.

Chains or cables?

Chains must have two sides attached with cross-sections. Cables can be permitted. Plastic chains are prohibited.

Placement

On a dual axle trailer the outside tires on both axles will need to be chained in addition to one tire on either side of either trailer axle.

Route specific

On the following routes all vehicles and combinations of vehicles of more than 10,000 pounds shall carry sufficient tire chains to meet the requirements:

- Snoqualmie Pass I-90, North Bend (MP 32) and Ellensburg (MP 101);

- Blewett Pass Route 97, between MP 145 and MP 185;
- Stevens Pass Route 2, Dryden (MP 108) to Index (MP 36);
- White Pass Route 12, Packwood (MP 135) to Naches (MP 187);
- Satus Pass Route 97, Columbia River (MP 00) to Toppenish (MP 59);
- Chinook Pass Route 410, Enumclaw (MP 25) to SR 12 (MP 342);
- Sherman Pass Route 20, Tonasket (MP 262) to Kettle Falls (MP 342);
- Omak to Nespelem Route 155, Omak (MP 79) to Nespelem (MP 45);
- Cle Elum to Teanaway Route 970, Cle Elum (MP 0) to Teanaway (MP 10);
- Gibbons Creek to Intersection of Cliffs Road Route 14, Gibbons Creek (MP 18) to intersection of Cliffs Rd. (MP 108);
- Newhalem to Winthrop Route 20, Newhalem (MP 120) to Winthrop (MP 192);
- Mount Baker Highway Route 542, (MP22) to (MP 57); and
- Ellensburg to Selah I-82 from Ellensburg (MP 3) to Selah (MP 26).

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Wyoming

When Wyoming officials enact the chain law, commercial vehicles must have chains on at least the two outside tires of one drive axle. Signs will notify you when the chain law is in effect.

Not complying can cost you a minimum of \$250. But if you block the highway because you don't have chains on, expect a \$750 fine.

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WHEN SIGNS MARKED "VEHICLES OVER 10,000 GVWR" OR "ALL VEHICLES - CHAINS REQUIRED (EXCEPT ALL-WHEEL DRIVE)" ARE POSTED, ALL VEHICLES OVER 10,000 LBS. GVWR MUST HAVE TIRE CHAINS MOUNTED ON THE TIRES AS REQUIRED.

TWO TO FOUR AXLES



One tire on each side of the drive axle.



Either drive axle, one tire on each side, same axle.



One tire on each side of the drive axle and one tire on either side of the trailer. This includes auto transporters with single drive axles.



Either drive axle, one tire on each side of the same axle and one tire on either side of the trailer.

FIVE AXLES



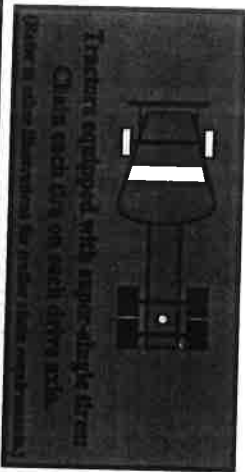
All tires on one drive axle and one tire on either side of last trailer axle.



All tires on the drive axle and one tire on either side of the last axle of the last trailer.



All tires on one drive axle or one tire on each side of both drive axles. One tire on either side of either trailer axle. This includes Automobile Transporters.



Truckers equipped with non-single drive axles on each side of both drive axles. This includes Automobile Transporters.

SIX OR MORE AXLES



All tires on the drive axle and one tire on either side of the last axle of the last trailer.



All tires on one drive axle and one tire on either side of the last two axles.



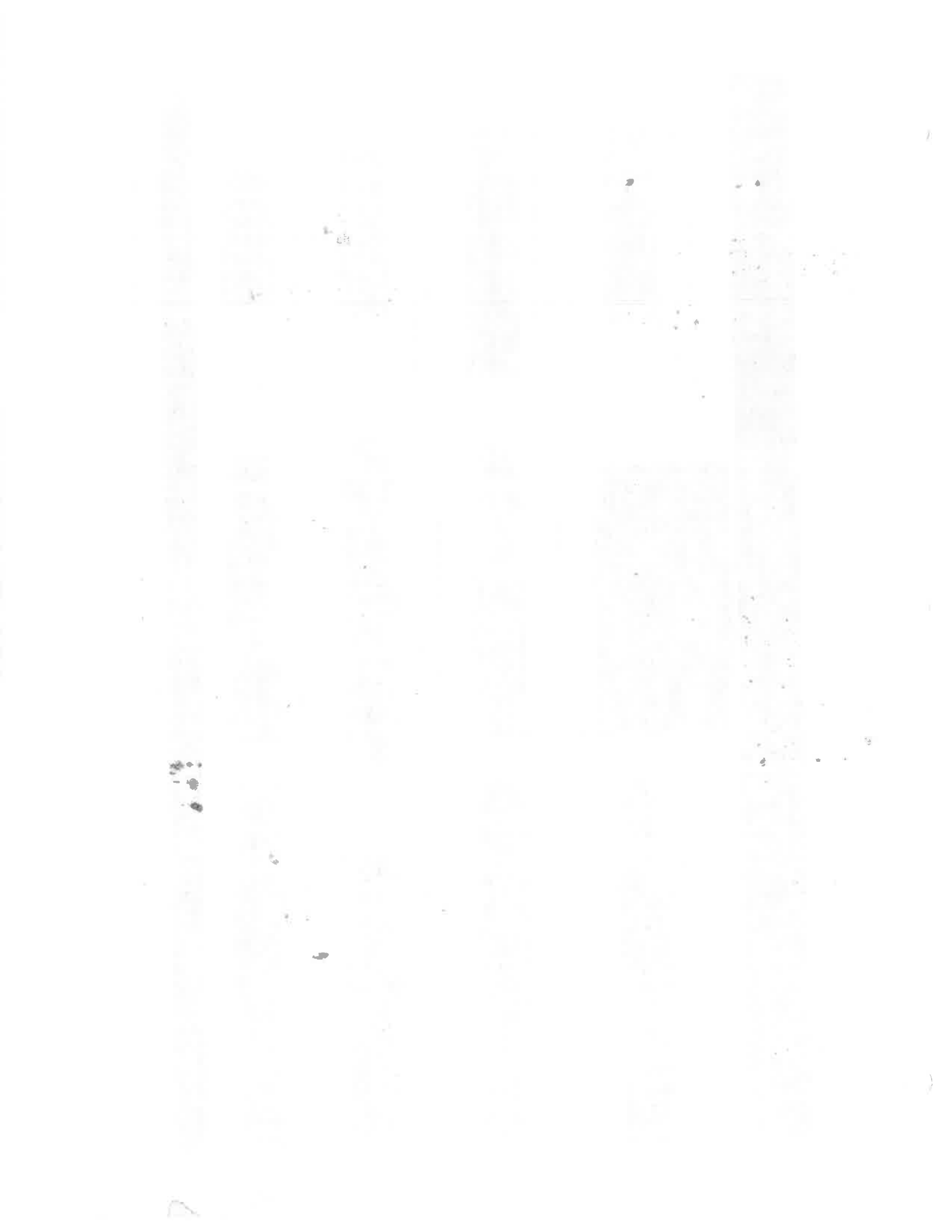
All tires on one drive axle and one tire on either side of the last axle of the last trailer.



Only on six or more axle combinations when posted "ALL VEHICLES CHAINS REQUIRED" one additional tire on each side of the drive axle shall be chained.

WINTER ROAD INFORMATION:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION online at <http://www.wa.gov> for traffic cameras and mountain pass report information. Or to state dial 511 or from out of state 1-800-695-7633. WASHINGTON STATE PATROL online at <http://www.spa.wa.gov>.



Chain Requirements

Revised 11/99



Vehicles are permitted in chain control areas when equipped with chains or Automatic Traction Device (ATD) as indicated.

Legal tread depth for mud and snow tires is 6/32" minimum.

Trucks with cable-type chains are legal in California. However, these trucks may be restricted at times due to local conditions.

The Department of Transportation

reserves the right to prohibit any vehicle from entering a chain control area when it is determined the vehicle will experience difficulty in safely traveling the area.



LEGEND

- Driving axle
- Non-driving axle
- Wheel with chains or ATD
- Wheel with no chains
- Chains required on inside dual if possible
- Drive axle must be chained
- Chains on trailers may be staggered front and back
- Caltrans may require chains on all drive wheels if conditions warrant
- Both axles must be chained. (Four wheels with chains or ATD.)

NOTES

- All vehicles, including four wheel drive vehicles, that are towing trailers must have chains on one drive axle.
- Trailers with brakes must have chains on one axle.
- Front wheel drive vehicles must have chains on front (drive) axle.
- On any semi-trailer, only one set of chains is required regardless of number of axles.
- Chains are not required on tag axle.



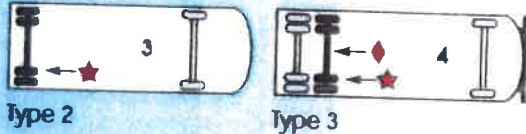
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TRUCKS



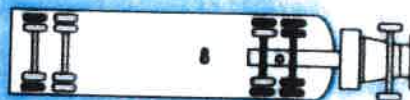
Truck Type 2



Truck Type 3



Tractor and Semi-trailer Single Dr.



Tractor and Semi-trailer Type 3-S-2



Tractor, Semi-trailer, and Trailer Type 3-S-1-T-2



Truck and Trailer Type 3-T-3 or 3-T-2

The following truck may be restricted when chains are required:



Tractor, Semi-trailer, and Trailer Type 2-S-1-T-2

For questions regarding these configurations, please contact the Caltrans Maintenance Program

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