

SEASONAL LOAD POSTINGS

The Ashland County Highway Department places seasonal load postings on Country Trunk Highways during each year's spring thaw. The allowable load during these periods is 4 tons per axle. The spring thaw period generally begins in the second week of March and lasts until the first or second week of May. The County utilizes 7 frost tubes installed in pavements to monitor frost conditions and determine when posting will be required. Authority to impose special or seasonal weight limits is given to local government under Wisconsin State Statute 349.16.

Spring Thaw - In spring, roads begin to thaw from both the top and bottom. As ice in the pavement melts, water saturates the road's base and subgrade. These layers lose strength, like a handful of mud compared to dry soil. As thawing continues, melt water becomes trapped in the upper subgrade, unable to drain away through the frozen soils below. Pavements weaken considerably in a very short time under these conditions.

The weakness can continue for weeks after the pavement is completely thawed. It takes a long time for water to leave the pavement because frost-susceptible silt and clay soils are relatively slow to drain.

During this weakened condition, roads are extremely susceptible to damage. Loads that would have little effect on a road during frozen or dry conditions can cause severe damage.

See attached University of Wisconsin Transportation Bulletins:

Bulletin #2 – How Vehicle Loads Affect Pavement Performance

Bulletin #8 – Using Weight Limits to Protect Local Roads

Special Hauling Permits – During the Spring Thaw, the Ashland County Highway Department will consider granting a special hauling permit for specific purposes. These special hauling permits will be considered on a case by case basis. Granting of a permit will be based on need and relative weight. Divisible loads (loads that can be hauled in smaller quantities such as gravel, concrete, logs) are not eligible. Non-divisible loads (loads that cannot be easily divided such as a piece of equipment) are eligible.

The Department does not exempt any commodity or vehicle type. Fuel haulers, delivery trucks, milk haulers, garbage trucks, etc., must contact the Department and arrange for a special hauling permit.

See attached Special Hauling Permit Form