

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 868

BY REPRESENTATIVE DEWITT

MTR VEHICLE/TRAILERS: Provides relative to the requirement that trailers have approved safety chains while being towed by certain vehicles

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a) and
3 to enact R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and (F) and 385(A)(4), relative to the regulation of motor
4 vehicles; to establish comprehensive requirements for brake equipment; to mandate
5 safety chain specifications for trailers and semitrailers; to eliminate specific
6 exemptions pertaining to farm equipment; to provide for an exception applicable to
7 the operation of certain vehicles on private property; and to provide for related
8 matters.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a) are
11 hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and (F) and 385(A)(4) are hereby
12 enacted to read as follows:

13 §341. Brake equipment required

14 * * *

15 C. Every trailer or ~~semi-trailer~~ of semitrailer used in commerce or that was
16 originally manufactured with brakes and has a gross weight of 3,000 three thousand
17 pounds or more, when operated upon a highway of this state, shall be equipped with
18 brakes adequate to control the movement of and to stop and hold such vehicle and
19 ~~so designed as to be applied~~ shall be designed so that the brakes may be applied by
20 the driver of the towing motor vehicle from its cab, and ~~said~~ the brakes shall be so
21 designed and connected that in case of an accidental breakaway of the towed vehicle
22 the brakes shall be automatically applied. A semitrailer, pole trailer, full trailer, or

1 four-wheel pole trailer with gross weight of three thousand pounds or less shall not
 2 be mandated to be equipped with braking systems, provided that the sum of the gross
 3 axle weight of the towed vehicle does not exceed forty percent of the sum of the
 4 gross axle weight of the towing vehicle.

5 D. Every motor vehicle, trailer or ~~semi-trailer~~ semitrailer manufactured or
 6 assembled after December 31, 1962, and thereafter sold in this state and operated
 7 upon the highways of this state shall be equipped with brakes upon all wheels of
 8 every such vehicle, if it was originally manufactured with brakes, except that no
 9 motorcycle, motor-driven cycle, or ~~semi-trailer~~ semitrailer of less than ~~1,500~~ three
 10 thousand pounds gross weight, need be equipped with brakes.

11 * * *

12 G. All sport, boat, or any other nonagricultural trailers and ~~semi-trailers of~~
 13 ~~less than 3000 pounds gross weight~~ semitrailers not used in commerce between six
 14 thousand and seven thousand pounds need not be equipped with brakes.

15 * * *

16 §384. Trailers and towed vehicles

17 A. The drawbar or connection between two vehicles or implements of
 18 husbandry, when one is towing the other, shall be of sufficient strength to pull all
 19 weight towed thereby and shall not exceed fifteen feet from one vehicle to the other,
 20 except that the drawbar or connection may exceed fifteen feet between any two
 21 vehicles transporting poles, pipes, machinery, or other objects of a structural nature
 22 which cannot be readily dismembered. The drawbar or connection shall be securely
 23 affixed in strict compliance with the manufacturer's specifications. This includes the
 24 installation of all required pins, clips, or locking mechanisms, thereby ensuring the
 25 prevention of any unintentional uncoupling while in operation.

26 * * *

27 D. Every trailer and semitrailer originally manufactured with safety chains
 28 or other safety devices ~~with a loaded gross weight capacity of up to six thousand~~
 29 ~~pounds~~ shall be equipped with safety chains or other safety ~~device~~ devices approved

1 in accordance with Subsection E of this Section. The safety chains or other approved
 2 safety ~~device~~ devices shall be securely attached to the towing vehicle when the trailer
 3 or semitrailer is in motion and shall be of sufficient strength to hold the trailer behind
 4 the towing vehicle in case the connection between the two vehicles detaches. The
 5 provisions contained in this Section shall not apply to fifth-wheel devices mounted
 6 on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles, including convertor dollies, that
 7 interface and connect with the upper coupler assembly of a semitrailer.

8 E.

9 * * *

10 (3) Safety chains and other safety devices mandated by Subsection D of this
 11 Section shall conform to manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor
 12 vehicle safety standards. These devices shall be deemed sufficient to ensure the
 13 secure connection between the towing vehicle and the trailer or semitrailer in the
 14 event of a failure of the primary coupling device.

15 F. The provisions contained in Subsections D and E of this Section,
 16 regarding safety chains or approved safety devices, shall not apply to any trailer,
 17 semitrailer, or vehicle while being operated exclusively on private property, or solely
 18 for the crossing of a public roadway by a trailer, semitrailer, or implement of
 19 husbandry between contiguous parcels of land owned or leased by the same person.

20 §385. Farm vehicles and equipment; exemptions

21 A.(1)(a) Farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment, except draglines and
 22 bulldozers, being operated or transported for bona fide agricultural purposes or the
 23 transportation of farm vehicles and equipment to be used for normal farm purposes
 24 by persons transporting such farm equipment or machinery, for distances not to
 25 exceed fifty miles from the point of origin, and fertilizer tending units shall be
 26 exempt from the requirements of R.S. 32:380 through 382 and, additionally, farm
 27 equipment shall be exempt from the requirements of ~~R.S. 32:384~~ R.S. 32:384(B),
 28 (C), and (E)(1) and (2).

29 * * *

Present law (R.S. 32:384(A)) requires the drawbar connection between two vehicles when one is towing the other be strong enough to pull all the weight towed and provides certain feet requirements between vehicles.

Proposed law modifies present law by specifying the requirement applies to drawbar connection between the two vehicles or implements of husbandry. Additionally, requires the drawbar connection be securely affixed in compliance with manufacturer's specifications. Specifies this includes installation of all required connection apparatuses to prevent unintentional detachment while in operation.

Present law (R.S. 32:384(D)) requires every trailer and semi-trailer with a loaded gross weight capacity of up to 6,000 lbs. be equipped with safety chains or an approved safety device approved by the office of state police.

Proposed law modifies present law by removing the weight maximum threshold of 6,000 lbs. Clarifies that every trailer or semitrailer originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices must be equipped with safety chains or other safety devices. Further exempts fifth-wheel devices mounted on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles from being equipped with a safety chain or approved safety device.

Proposed law limits the safety chain and safety device requirements to trailers and semitrailers originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices.

Present law (R.S. 32:384(E)) requires the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state police to approve safety devices other than safety chains to be used when towing trailers and semi-trailers. Provides the criteria in approving of such safety devices.

Proposed law requires safety chains and other devices mandated by present law conform with manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards. Further requires that such devices be deemed sufficient to ensure the secure connection between the towing vehicle and the trailer or semitrailer in the event of a failure of the primary coupling device.

Proposed law provides that the safety chain and approved safety device requirements of proposed law shall not apply to any trailer, semitrailer, or vehicle operated exclusively on private property, or operated solely for the crossing of a public roadway between contiguous parcels of land owned or leased by the same person.

Present law (R.S. 32:385(A)(1)(a)) exempts farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment, including fertilizer tending units but excluding draglines and bulldozers, from width (R.S. 32:380), height (R.S. 32:381), length (R.S. 32:382) and trailers and towed vehicle (R.S. 32:384) requirements and authorizes such when used for normal farm purposes or transported up to 50 miles from their origin.

Proposed law clarifies that the farm equipment exemption is applicable to the requirements of present law (R.S. 32:384(B), (C), and (E)(1) and (2)) and removes the reference to "air" miles from the fifty mile distance limitation.

Proposed law requires trailers, semitrailers, and implements of husbandry used in connection with farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment to comply with the towing safety requirements of R.S. 32:384(A), (D), and (E)(3) and requires trailers and semi-trailers used with farm vehicles to have a properly secured drawbar or other primary connection that meets manufacturer specifications to prevent accidental detachment.

(Amends R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a); Adds R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and (F) and 385(A)(4))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works to the original bill:

1. Clarify that for safety chains and other devices mandated by present law to conform with manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards, instead of the strength, attachment, and performance standards established by the Department of Transportation and Development.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Add a provision requiring motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers that were originally manufactured with brakes to be equipped with brakes upon all wheels.
2. Add a provision requiring trailers and semitrailers originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices to be equipped with safety chains or other safety devices.
3. Add a provision providing for the exclusion of trailers, semitrailers, or vehicles operated exclusively on private property or solely crossing a public roadway between contiguous parcels of land owned or leased by the same person from the provisions of proposed law.
4. Remove "air" from the fifty mile distance limitation for farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment.
5. Provide that farm equipment shall be exempt from the requirements of present law (R.S. 32:384(B), (C), and (E)(1) and (2)).
6. Clarify a proposed law provision by specifying that trailers, semitrailers, and implements of husbandry used in connection with farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment must comply with the towing safety requirements of present and proposed law (R.S. 32:384(A), (D), and (E)(3)).
7. Make technical changes.