

Governor Brownback Signs Drought Relief Legislation

Governor Sam Brownback signed HB 2202, legislation to allow an automatic increase in hay truck transportation limits upon drought declaration in Kansas.

While the state has received some welcome moisture in spring 2013, Governor Brownback said drought conditions remain in all 105 counties. For the past two consecutive years, Brownback has issued executive orders to temporarily suspend certain motor carrier rules and regulations in order to expedite the delivery of hay to livestock in drought-stricken areas. HB 2202 will make these exemptions automatic upon a governor's drought declaration and will further expedite drought response and delivery efforts.

"Farmers and ranchers are at the mercy of Mother Nature and should not have to wait for an executive order to allow them to efficiently deliver hay and forage to their livestock," Governor Brownback said. "Over the past two years, my administration has continuously worked to rapidly respond to the drought but there is no room for politics in the face of a natural disaster like the ongoing drought. We cannot end this drought but we can take commonsense steps, like implementing HB 2202, to help farmers and ranchers cope with the ongoing drought situation."

HB 2202 allows for the suspension of requirements for registration and fuel tax permits from the Kansas Department of Revenue and licensing, certification and permitting rules and regulations as required by the Kansas Corporation Commission during drought emergencies. Participating motor carriers will only be allowed to operate during daylight hours and must comply with flag, sign and lighting requirements for over-width vehicles. Additionally, participating motor carriers will not be allowed to drive during inclement weather conditions. Finally, HB 2202 does not remove the motor carrier's responsibilities to comply with the safety and commercial driver's license requirements.

HB 2202 increases the maximum width and height for trucks delivering hay to drought-stricken areas. Participating motor carriers are limited to a load that does not exceed 12 feet in width and does not exceed a height of 14 feet, six inches. Under normal circumstances, haulers are required to obtain a permit for loads exceeding 8.5 feet in width and 14 feet in height. All other applicable state and federal regulations continue to apply, including the requirement to have a valid driver's license.

"The Kansas Department of Agriculture is committed to supporting our state's farmers, especially in challenging situations like the drought," Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman said. "From fluctuating markets and regulatory uncertainty from the federal government, they face enough uncertainty. They should not also have to wonder if they will be able to deliver hay to livestock during a drought. HB 2202 will ensure our farmers and ranchers have access to the necessary tools to mitigate the effects of this ongoing drought