

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Heavy Vehicle Overloading

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) wishes to remind haulage users that a vehicle weight restriction of 32 tonnes gross vehicle mass (GVM) and an axle set weight limit of 16 tonnes remains in place for vehicles crossing Tamavua-i-Wai Bridge.

The LTA is working closely with the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) on the issue of overloading.

Land Transport Authority, Board Chairperson, Vijay Maharaj, has advised that heavy vehicle operators passing over the Tamavua-i-Wai bridge, must not carry excess loads, as these can have severe impacts on bridge elements, which may result in extensive repair works to the bridge in future.

"Vehicle load affects the conditions of a bridge in a number of ways," Mr Maharaj said.

"The gross load of a vehicle affects the beams of the bridge, with distributed loads causing less stress on the beams than concentrated loads.

Heavy loads from a vehicle can overstress surfaces of the bridge, particularly where beam spacing's are wide."

Mr Maharaj said, consequently, wheel size and loading would affect the plank of the bridge, with high wheel loads and small tyre sizes causing the worst effects on the weak cantilever sections.

Therefore, it is important that, heavy vehicles adhere to the correct configuration, including length, axle spacing, track width, wheel size and load size in order to ensure that our infrastructure is safe from any damage.

Additionally, some of the risks associated with overloading are as follows:

- The vehicle will be less stable, difficult to steer and take longer to stop. Vehicles react differently when the maximum weights, which they are designed to carry are exceeded.
- Overloaded vehicles can cause the tyres to overheat and wear rapidly which increases the chance of premature, dangerous and expensive failure or blow-outs.
- The driver's control and operating space in the overloaded vehicle are diminished, escalating the chances of an accident.

- The overloaded vehicle cannot accelerate as normal – making it difficult to overtake.
- At night, the headlights of an overloaded vehicle will tilt up, blinding oncoming drivers to possible debris or obstructions on the roadway
- Brakes have to work harder due to 'the riding of brakes' and because the vehicle is heavier due to overloading. Brakes overheat and lose their effectiveness to stop the car.
- The whole suspension system comes under stress and, over time, the weakest point can give way.
- By overloading your vehicle, you will incur higher maintenance costs to the vehicle – tyres, brakes, shock absorbers and higher fuel consumption.

FRA Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Moore says heavy vehicle operators passing over the Tamavua-i-Wai Bridge must not carry loads in excess of these restrictions as they can have a severe impact on bridge elements, which may result in extensive future repair works and a reduction in the service life of the bridge.

“Road are generally designed as flexible pavement and some compression movement is expected, that remains intact. But when the waterproofing is compromised tyres will force water to enter into the pavement structure and weaken a road's ability to withstand the design load.”

Mr Moore said the FRA's long term plan is to construct a modular bridge next to the Tamavua-i-Wai Bridge.

“In the meantime, members of the public are advised to drive carefully across the bridge as per the posted speed limits and comply with the weight restrictions placed,” he said.

Ends.

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A truck weighed at the Lami weighbridge.