

SUBJECT: NEW REAR BUMPERS REQUIRED IN 1998

Beginning in January 1998, all trailer bumpers on all model trailers will be certified to comply with DOT 49 CFT Part 571.223 and 571.224. The new Federal Motor Vehicle Standard specifies minimum horizontal force, plastic energy absorbed, geometry, and labeling requirements for rear impact guards on both trailers and semi-trailers. Each trailer will receive a *BUMPER LABEL* that certifies that the trailer is in compliance with the new requirements. Although we may begin earlier, the mandatory implementation date is January 26, 1998.

EXEMPTION

There is a “wheels back” exemption from the new standard, where no upgrade of the bumper is required by DOT. The requirement for the exemption is that the rear edge of the tire be less than 12” from the extreme rear of the trailer. Due to the variations in tire size, future tire wear alignment, and production tolerances, Utility will generally require that no bumper be exempted unless it is designed to be less than 10” from the extreme rear of the trailer. Bumpers that do qualify for the exemption will receive an “EXEMPT” label instead of the regular DOT label.

GENERAL REPAIR GUIDELINES

The guidelines for repairs done to pre-1998 bumpers were general and simple. *Not so with the new bumper. The new bumper cannot be modified or reinforced in any way because that could change its energy absorbing characteristics significantly.* (According to a recent article in CCJ Magazine, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) plans to impose a new requirement that the original energy-absorbing ability of post-1997 guards be retained until the trailer is scrapped. The article further states that “a final rule”, according to FHWA insiders, “is more than a year away.”)

The bumper structure consists of the horizontal tube, vertical uprights, the portion of the frame to which the uprights are attached, the buckplate or rear rail, and any reinforcing gussets located in the rear five feet of the trailer.

When doing repairs, the bumper structure must be put back into original condition. Minor dents can be straightened. If parts need to be replaced, we suggest only original OEM parts are used, as the thickness and tensile strength of the parts may be critical. If assistance or drawings are required, please contact the Field Service Department.

The next three pages with this bulletin are rear bumper outlines for the VS2R, VS2DC, and the FS2CHA with “axle forward”. Item numbers shown within a circle O are structural support members for the DOT bumper. Boxed dimensions □ are DOT requirements; non-boxed dimensions are Utility design dimensions. Other outline drawings are available upon request.

TRUCK BODY KITS (TBK'S)

Dock bumpers and horizontals will no longer be supplied with TBK and LBK TRUCK BODY kits. There are a number of different truck frames that the bodies will be installed upon which we would not certify the installation.

LIFTGATES

Each liftgate configuration must be checked to determine if it can be used. Tuk-A-Way or Tuckunder type gates, where the liftgate occupies the same space as the bumper while “in transit”, will be exempt from the new rule. This does not mean that a strong bumper is not necessary.

Rail-Type liftgates generally do not occupy the same space as the bumper while “in transit”, and will not be exempt from the new bumper requirements. The rearmost portion of the liftgate (rails or platform) must be within 12 inches of the bumper and at the same time clear the bumper during operation of the gate. Some gates will not meet the criteria and will not be able to be used. In addition, certain platform sizes and ramps will not qualify.

(Reference: UTM Sales Bulletin Letter No. 3445)
Dwgs enclosed: E-3217, EB-8547, and EB-8555)

Field Service Department
UTILITY TRAILER MANUFACTURING COMPANY