



32800 Abnormal Loads Policy

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1. About this policy and procedure

1.1 This policy sets out how Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police manage abnormal load movements across the five counties of Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. It explains the administrative process, the circumstances in which Roads Policing Officers may be deployed, and the responsibilities of all staff involved.

1.2 The policy supports the aims of the JOU Roads Policing Strategy, including:

- Preventing harm and saving lives
- Tackling crime
- Driving technology and innovation
- Changing minds

1.3 It provides a framework for the safe and effective management of abnormal indivisible loads, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and congruence with national guidance. It is primarily intended for JOU Roads Policing officers, Force Control Room staff, and those working in contact management.

2. General principles

2.1 Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police are committed to supporting a safe and efficient Ab Load industry. **Our priorities are safety, congestion management, and community confidence.**

2.2 The Police role in abnormal load management is to check the hauliers' route against restrictive dimension data and to provide advice. Police can reject a route, change a date or time or insist on additional control measures so as to keep the public safe.

2.3 There is no legal requirement for abnormal loads to be escorted by police. Escorts will only be provided following a full assessment by 'Cascade' and the JOU Roads Policing Operations Manager. Decisions will focus on safety, congestion, and the suitability of the proposed route and timing.

2.4 Under normal operating circumstances only **CoP Escort-trained JOU Roads Policing officers** will be deployed to escort abnormal loads. Officers must conduct risk assessments and ensure all reasonable steps are taken to minimise risk to the public and themselves.

2.5 This policy adheres to the current NPCC guidance and incorporates the 2009 IPCC recommendations relating to enforcement, training, authorisation, and movement of abnormal indivisible loads.

3. Legislative Framework

3.1 The movement of abnormal indivisible loads is governed by:

Construction and Use Regulations 1986 (C&U)

- Primary legislation covering construction standards and maximum dimensions. This is the only legislation enforceable for prosecution.

Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (STGO)

- Permits vehicles and loads that exceed standard weight or width limits and sets out requirements for agricultural and other specialist vehicles.

3.2 The legislation is largely permissive: if hauliers meet notification requirements, abnormal loads may be moved without a permit. Exceptions include:

- Loads **over 5.0m wide** require a Highways England VR1 authorisation.
- Loads **over 6.1m wide, 27.4m rigid length (C&U), 30m (STGO) or 150 tonnes** require a Highways England Special Order.

3.3 There is no legal requirement for police escorts. Hauliers are responsible for the safe operational movement of their loads.

3.4 Loads that exceed specified limits require an attendant, who may travel in an accompanying vehicle acting as an escort, provided it remains with the load throughout the journey and is in contact with the load driver, via a radio connection (NOT mobile phone).

4. Governance and Service Level Agreement

4.1 The Superintendent for JOU Roads Policing holds overall responsibility for abnormal load movements across the five Counties.

4.2 The JOU will deliver Ab Loads policing in congruence with the 2025 NPCC guidance.

4.3 Digital advances in mapping technology coupled with economies of scale mean that specialist outsourced services are able to deliver more efficient, reliable, and structured assessments than 'in house' models of delivery. 'Cascade Abloads Police' is the company chosen to fulfil the 'Ab Load Officer' role for the majority of JOU business-as-usual work.

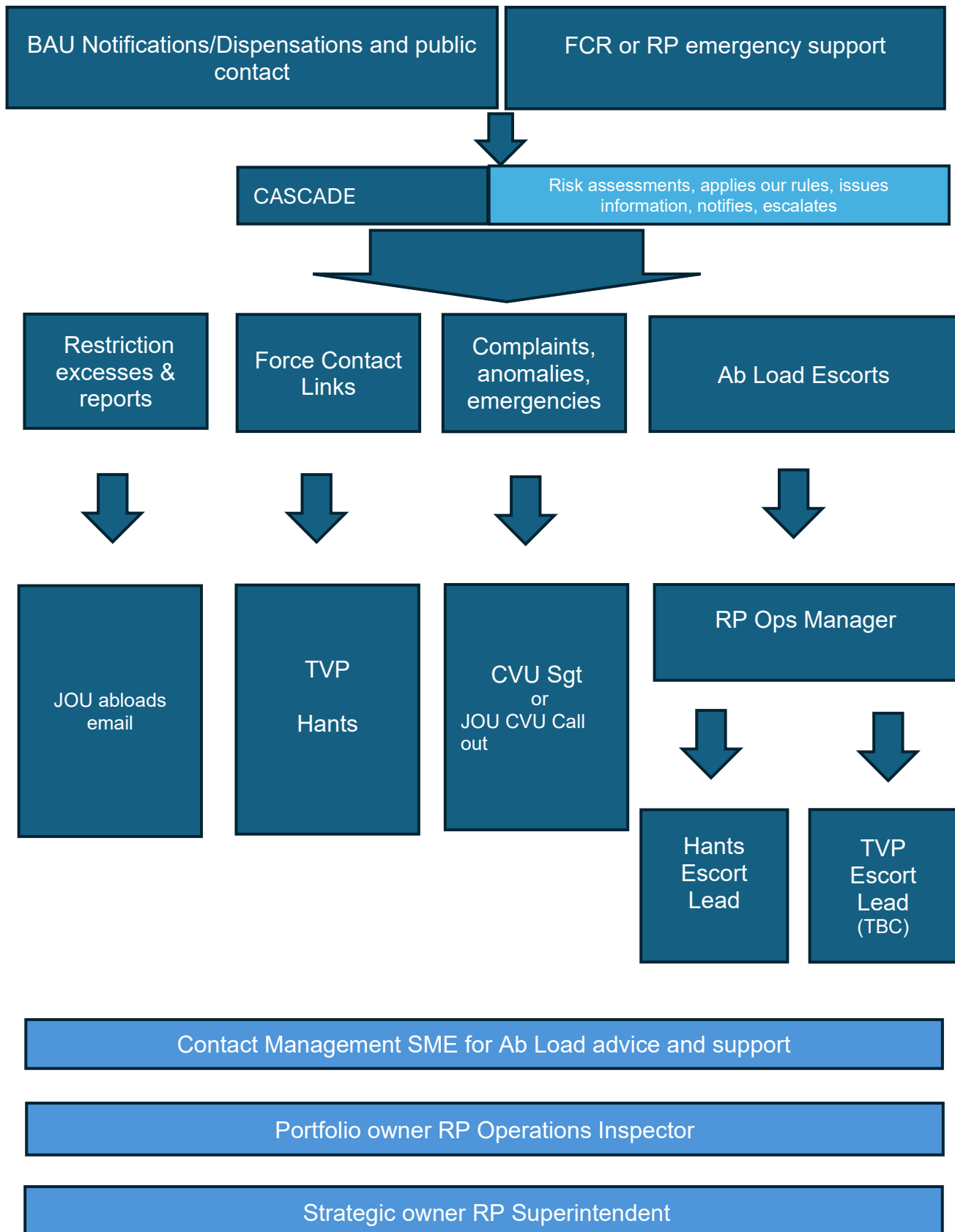
4.4 The services 'Cascade' deliver are defined in paragraph 2.1 of our Service Level Agreement. These duties are:

- Operating AbLoads Police in accordance with Cascade's current recommended best practice by a trained and competent operator
- Receiving and processing Abnormal Load Notifications on behalf of the Employee
- Responding to Abnormal Load Notification enquiries and short notice and emergency telephone calls during normal business hours
- Advising the Employer of Special Order movements and when specified threshold vehicle criteria are exceeded
- Advising the Employer of notified movements where a self-escort is deemed to be required based on pre-agreed criteria provided by the Employer

- Advising the Employer of notified movements where a police escort is deemed to be required based on pre-agreed criteria provided by the Employer for onward action by the Employer to instigate and manage the police escort procedure
- Issuing Police dispensations to hauliers based on pre-agreed criteria provided by the Employer
- Maintaining records of annual dispensations and advising hauliers of impending expiry

4.5 'Cascade' work on our behalf as our single point of contact for all abnormal load notifications. Reports on demand numbers, service quality and pattern analysis will be provided monthly. Deeper service review and improvement meetings as well as value for money assessments will take place every 6 months.

4.6 The structure of Abnormal Load management on the JOU is shown below:



5. Notification Requirements

5.1 Hauliers must notify police if their loads exceed:

- Width: 2.9m (C&U) / 3.0m (STGO)
- Rigid length: 18.65m (C&U) / 18.75m (STGO)
- Vehicle combination length: 25.9m
- Side projection: 305mm
- Front/rear projection: 3.05m
- Gross weight: 44 tonnes

5.2 Cascade will assess each movement, considering dimensions, weight, timing, route suitability, bridges, overhead obstructions, and congestion. Hauliers may be required to conduct a route survey.

6. General Restrictions

6.1 The Chief Constable retains authority to stipulate local restrictions so as to maximise safety and minimise congestion. Consequently, using traffic flow and collision data, the following JOU wide restrictions apply:

- No movements off the SRN or linked dual carriageways between 07:00–09:00 and 16:00–18:00
- No movements on the A34 over 4.11m wide between 07:00–09:00 and 16:00–18:00

7. Escorting Abnormal Indivisible Loads

7.1 Escorts within our force boundaries should be provided by the haulier. Self/private escorts:

- Must comply with instructions issued by the police
- Must follow the Highways Agency / NPCC Code of Practice
- Hauliers and self/private escorts have no legal powers to stop or control traffic, under these circumstances a Police escort must be considered.

7.2 Police escorts will only be provided when specifically requested and will be charged at Special Police Service rates, with a minimum of six hours per officer. Charges may include travel time, vehicle use and mileage.

7.3 Hauliers requesting a police escort must give at least 8 days' notice.

7.4 Charges will still apply if the movement is cancelled or amended without 8 days' notice.

7.5 Charges will still apply if the pre-escort check results in the vehicle being unable to continue.

7.6 In limited cases, charges may be waived – for example, when police assistance is only required briefly to negotiate a single pinch point. This decision rests with the RP Operations Manager.

8. Escort Thresholds

8.1 Movements over the following dimensions require an escort. This is expected to be private but might be requested of the Police:

Motorways:

- Width: > 4.6m
- Length: > 30m (subject to assessment)
- Weight: > 130 tonnes

Dual carriageways / A roads:

- Width: > 4.11m
- Length: > 30m (subject to assessment)
- Weight: > 100 tonnes

Other roads:

- Width: > 4.1m (or > 3.65m in areas such as the New Forest, Warsash, Isle of Wight)
- Length: > 28m
- Weight: > 100 tonnes

9. Military Vehicles

9.1 Military vehicles travelling on agreed routes do not require an escort if:

- Width $\leq$ 4.11m
- Weight < 120 tonnes

9.2 When they do require an escort their options are Military, Military Police, Private Escort or the Civilian Police.

10. Night-Time Movement

- 10.1 Night-time movements are generally permitted on motorways, provided the load remains within the motorway network and the vehicle is suitably marked/illuminated.
- 10.2 Use of dual carriageways may be authorised depending on lighting, weather and bespoke nature of the movement.
- 10.3 Movements on all other roads during darkness require approval of a Roads Policing Sergeant.
- 10.4 Movements to or from motorways – including slip roads, roundabouts, and non-motorway approaches – should not occur during darkness without explicit permission.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 Abnormal Loads Officers (Cascade)

- Check all notifications
- Conduct risk assessments
- Manage annual dispensations
- Refer cases requiring police escort consideration to the RP Operations Manager
- Escalate or refer non BAU requests back to Police for a decision

11.2 Escorting Police Officers

Primary objectives:

- Prevent danger, injury and ensure road safety
- No escort will commence until the vehicle, load and documentation have been checked for compliance with legal requirements, including markings, lighting, and Construction & Use (C&U) Regulations.

Secondary objectives:

- Facilitate movement of the load
- Manage traffic flow

Officers must:

- Verify compliance with legislation before escorting
- Halt the load if safety concerns arise
- Know the route in advance and conduct a recce if needed
- Ensure the Control Room has advance details
- Prevent significant traffic build-up by pulling the load over when safe
- Keep convoy loads together and avoid stopping loads on bridges

11.3 Partnership Working

Our Abnormal load risk is managed in consultation with:

- Local Highways Departments
- Public utilities

- National Highways
- The NPCC
- College of Policing
- DVSA
- The CVPB
- Neighbouring police forces

12. Other related policy. Procedures, guidance or information sources.

- Construction and Use Regulations 1986
- Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003
- National Highways Lighting and Marking Codes of Practice
- Code of Practice for Self-escorting of Abnormal Loads
- NPCC Abnormal Load Guidance 2025
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Agreement for the Provision of Abnormal Loads Notification Services 2025

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Owning department:	RPU