

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4012 AS INTRODUCED 1-25-01

Farmers and their farm vehicles and equipment are exempted from a number of licensing and equipment requirements under the Michigan Vehicle Code.

Thus, while the vehicle code generally requires all drivers of motor vehicles to be licensed and to have the appropriate group designation and endorsements for the type or class of vehicle being driven or towed, it exempts farm vehicles (called "implements of husbandry" in the code) from these requirements when they are used in farm operations by farmers, their family members, or employees. More specifically, under section 302, a person driving or operating "a farm tractor or implement of husbandry temporarily drawn, moved, or propelled on a highway" is exempt from the code's general requirement that operators of motor vehicles be licensed, while section 312e (which otherwise requires that a person have a "group" designation on his or her operator's license before operating or towing vehicles with certain gross vehicle weight ratings) exempts farmers (their family members and employees) from this requirement when farm vehicles are being used to transport agricultural products, farm machinery, farm supplies (or a combination of these) to or from a farm and when the vehicle is operated within 150 miles of the farm and is not used in the operation of a common or contract motor carrier.

Among other things, the code also generally requires all motor vehicles to be equipped with brake systems on all wheels, and most trailers and semi-trailers to have some sort of braking system, with the exception of farm vehicles and trailers used exclusively in connection with farming operations and not used for hire. The vehicle code also specifies the maximum stopping distances for motor vehicles "or combination of motor-drawn vehicles," but Public Act 91 of 1995 exempted implements of husbandry from these stopping distance requirements if the motor vehicle hauling the implement of husbandry doesn't exceed 25 miles an hour or the maximum speed for which the implement of husbandry was designed.

Finally, the vehicle code generally requires vehicles to have certain other kinds of equipment such as reflective devices and certain kinds of tires. Thus, for example, section 688 of the vehicle code requires, among other things, certain kinds of reflective triangles on slow moving vehicles, including vehicles with a maximum potential speed of 25 miles an hour, implements of husbandry, farm tractors, and special mobile equipment, while section 710 specifies certain requirements for tires, including prohibiting the sale for highway use of "unsafe" tires (where "unsafe" is specified in a list of conditions that includes tires marked "for farm use only").

The bill generally would amend the vehicle code to require farm vehicles and their drivers to meet vehicle code requirements if the vehicle is driven or operated at speeds of more than 25

miles an hour. Thus, the bill would require a driver's license, and any appropriate group vehicle designations, for someone to drive or operate a farm vehicle on a highway at speeds over 25 miles an hour. Only farm vehicles traveling at 25 miles an hour or less would be exempt from the vehicle code's braking requirements. More specifically, a farm tractor or implement of husbandry that didn't have brakes on all wheels would be prohibited from exceeding a speed of 25 miles an hour, while all farm tractors or self-propelled or drawn implements of husbandry would be required to have brakes on all wheels if operated at speeds exceeding 25 miles an hour. Finally, the bill would add new language to section 710 of the vehicle code to specify "speed ratings" for tires for farm tractors and self-propelled or drawn implements of husbandry, and would prohibit the operation of these vehicles on a highway when the speed at which the vehicle was being operated exceeded the speed for which the tire was rated under the bill.

MCL 257.302 et al.

Analyst: J. Hunault

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