

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

ACT 778 (HB 868)

2026 Regular Session

Dewitt

Prior law (R.S. 32:341(C)) specified the requirements for brake equipment on motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers, stipulating weight-based thresholds and breakaway brake systems. Required that every trailer or semi-trailer weighing 3,000 lbs. or more be equipped with brakes that allow the towing driver to control, stop, and hold the trailer, and that automatically apply if the trailer accidentally breaks away.

New law modifies prior law by specifying that the brake requirements apply to trailers and semitrailers used in commerce or that were originally manufactured with brakes. Requires that the brakes be designed in a way that can be applied by the driver towing a vehicle from its cab. Additionally, exempts semi-trailers, pole trailers, full trailers, or four-wheel pole trailers with a gross weight of 3,000 lbs. or less from being equipped with a braking system only if the sum of the gross axle weight of the towed vehicle does not exceed 40 percent of the sum of the gross axle weights of the towing vehicle.

Prior law (R.S. 32:341(D)) required that all motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers made after Dec. 31, 1962, and sold in this state have brakes on all wheels, except motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and semi-trailers under 1,500 lbs.

New law modifies prior law by changing the weight requirement for motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and semitrailers from 1,500 lbs. to 3,000 lbs and requires motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers that were originally manufactured with brakes be equipped with brakes on all wheels.

Prior law (R.S. 32:341(G)) specified that all sport, boating, or nonagricultural trailers and semi-trailers under 3,000 lbs. are not required to have brakes.

New law modifies prior law by changing the weight requirement from applying to specific trailers and semitrailers less than 3,000 lbs. to those not used in commerce between 6,000 and 7,000 lbs.

Prior law (R.S. 32:384(A)) required the drawbar connection between two vehicles when one is towing the other be strong enough to pull all the weight towed and provides certain feet requirements between vehicles.

New law modifies prior law by specifying the requirement applies to the drawbar or connection between the two vehicles or implements of husbandry. Additionally, requires the drawbar or connection be securely affixed in compliance with manufacturer's specifications. Specifies this includes installation of all required connection apparatuses to prevent unintentional detachment while in operation.

Prior law (R.S. 32:384(D)) required every trailer and semi-trailer with a loaded gross weight capacity of up to 6,000 lbs. be equipped with safety chains or a safety device approved by the office of state police.

New law modifies prior law by removing the weight maximum threshold of 6,000 lbs. Clarifies that every trailer or semitrailer originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices must be equipped with safety chains or other safety devices. Further exempts fifth-wheel devices mounted on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles from being equipped with a safety chain or approved safety device.

New law limits the safety chain and safety device requirements to trailers and semitrailers originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices.

Existing law (R.S. 32:384(E)) requires the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state police, to approve safety devices other than safety chains to be used when towing trailers and semi-trailers. Provides the criteria for approving such safety devices.

New law requires safety chains and other devices mandated by existing law conform with manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards. Further requires that such devices be deemed sufficient to ensure the secure connection between the

towing vehicle and the trailer or semitrailer in the event of a failure of the primary coupling device.

New law provides that the safety chain and approved safety device requirements of new law shall not apply to any trailer, semitrailer, or vehicle operated exclusively on private property, or operated solely for the crossing of a public roadway between contiguous parcels of land owned or leased by the same person.

Existing law (R.S. 32:385(A)(1)(a)) exempts farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment, including fertilizer tending units but excluding draglines and bulldozers, from width (R.S. 32:380), height (R.S. 32:381), length (R.S. 32:382) and trailers and towed vehicle (R.S. 32:384) requirements and authorizes such when used for normal farm purposes or transported up to 50 miles from their origin.

New law clarifies that the farm equipment exemption is applicable to the requirements of existing law (R.S. 32:384(B), (C), and (E)(1) and (2)) and removes the reference to "air" miles from the fifty mile distance limitation.

New law requires trailers, semitrailers, and implements of husbandry used in connection with farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment to comply with the towing safety requirements of R.S. 32:384(A), (D), and (E)(3) and requires trailers and semitrailers used with farm vehicles to have a properly secured drawbar or other primary connection that meets manufacturer specifications to prevent accidental detachment.

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a); Adds R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and (F) and 385(A)(4))