



Leana Kinley <leana@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

Compression Braking

Sheriff Dave Brown <daveb@co.skamania.wa.us>

Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 12:54 PM

To: leana <leana@ci.stevenson.wa.us>, Pat Bond <patb@co.skamania.wa.us>

Leana,

Pat passed along the compression brake question.

I thought I might take a minute to offer some thoughts. As you mentioned, RCW 46.37.395 addresses the issue of “compression brakes on vehicles over 10,000 GVWR. The current statute prohibits use an “**unmuffled**” compression brake. In all of my conversations over the past several years with drivers of vehicles utilizing this braking method, all have told me that there are no “Unmuffled” compression brakes in vehicles meeting this weight rating. I suspect in 30-50 years ago, unmuffled compression brakes were quite common.

Unfortunately, it seems even the “muffled” version creates consternation for some who are subjected to its use.

This is a difficult issue to tackle for a variety of reasons:

1. Most of the noise producing vehicles are log trucks who are bringing loads from out of the higher elevations down to SR-14.
2. Most, if not all, of the travel routes from the timber lands require lengthy downhill travel to reach the State highway.
3. Prohibition of the use of the compression brake stands to create a significant safety issue for the driver and for other vehicles and pedestrians utilizing county and city streets.
4. Harvesting operations and hours are often impacted by weather conditions that require operations to begin in early morning hours thereby creating the reality that trucks will be traveling during times when some are still sleeping.
5. Even muffled, the compression brake can be disturbing to the receiver.

While the current statute allows for more restrictive local ordinances, consideration of a prohibition of all compression braking should be viewed as unreasonable in my opinion considering the topography of the City of Stevenson, density of residential and commercial buildings at intersections and public and pedestrian use of city streets and sidewalks.

I realize that you are not suggesting a prohibition however, I think it is reasonable to believe that it may be considered as a possibility as council looks to address the issue.

Alternatives could possibly include the following:

1. Education with those companies who are conducting operations involving heavy hauling. Suggesting they strongly consider the impact to residential neighborhoods and limit use to absolute necessity only.

2. Determine if sporadic “no compression brake” zones are feasible therein providing some use but not constant braking.
3. Recognize the short-term nature of this type of use as it relates to the harvest levels that remain on lands above the city.
4. Work with harvesting companies to identify haul routes that would alleviate pressure on more populated areas of the city.
5. Public education and alertness upcoming timber sales that may impact road use and noise.
6. Recognition of the history of timber harvest in the county and its importance to our economic vitality.

Just a few thoughts. Let me know if you have questions.

Dave

From: Pat Bond <patb@co.skamania.wa.us>
Sent: Thursday, September 9, 2021 10:40 AM
To: Sheriff Dave Brown <daveb@co.skamania.wa.us>
Subject: FW: Compression Braking

From: Leana Kinley <leana@ci.stevenson.wa.us>
Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2021 10:23 AM
To: Pat Bond <patb@co.skamania.wa.us>
Subject: Compression Braking

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Pat,

At the last council meeting they discussed changes to the noise control ordinance. One change they mentioned is in regards to engine/compression braking. I'm not sure if they're looking for an outright ban, or re-iteration of RCW 46.37.395. Do you have an input to provide regarding this?

Thanks,

Leana Kinley, EMPA, CMC

City Administrator

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