

Truck sales in Massachusetts are frozen over new EV requirements

Manufacturers say they can't meet the state's new rules

By [Aaron Pressman](#) Globe Staff, Updated February 19, 2025

A showdown between state regulators and truck manufacturers has brought the market for new heavy vehicles in Massachusetts to a virtual standstill, challenging businesses from landscapers and long-haulers to the dealers who supply them.

The Healey administration on Jan. 1 instituted a requirement that electric vehicles make up at least 7 percent of new medium and heavy duty trucks sold in Massachusetts. But dealers say the industry isn't ready. And buyers, worried about costs and the logistics of charging, remain wary of electric vehicles for many applications.

Prices for electric versions are double or more than diesel trucks and there are almost no charging stations on highways for big rigs. Faced with possible fines for missing the targets, manufacturers have in turn passed the burden onto truck dealers, requiring them to sell one electric model before they can sell 10 or more diesel models.

The so-called "ratio" requirement has left local dealers turning away hundreds of customers for diesel trucks, according to Kevin Weeks, executive director of the dealer industry group Trucking Association of Massachusetts.

"Four or five years ago, when the rule was put in place, it sounded very realistic," Weeks said. "The problem is the the technology just has not kept up."

There hasn't been a single new diesel or electric truck over 16,000 pounds sold in Massachusetts so far in 2025, Weeks said, compared to more than 2,000 of both types over all of last year.

Advocates say the rules, which ratchet up the minimum in coming years, are essential for Massachusetts to meet its climate goals and reduce particulate emissions that cause serious health problems. They maintain there are more than enough appealing electric trucks available to reach the required minimums but the industry is just trying to delay the EV transition.

Manufacturers "are muddying the waters on this and, in many cases, trying to pass the buck to dealers and fleets," said Jordan Stutt, senior director for the northeast region at nonprofit CALSTART. "That's unfortunate, because we know that there are plenty of available vehicles."

Of more than 186,000 registered medium and heavy duty trucks in Massachusetts, only 301 were fully electric or plugin hybrids, up from 98 a year earlier, according to data from the Registry of Motor Vehicles (By contrast, there are almost 140,000 electric passenger vehicles).

The state is far behind California, which has similar rules for EV trucks. More than 7 percent of 104,000 medium and heavy duty truck sales there were electric already in 2022. California has a far more developed charging network and more short haul routes from its busy ports, so it's easier for businesses to rely on EVs for shipping and deliveries.

W.L. French, a Billerica-based soil and excavation waste hauler, is caught in the middle of the dispute, unable to buy new trucks this year after adding nine diesels to its fleet of about 50 last year.

At more than \$400,000, a typical electric semi-hauler is more than double the price of a diesel model, but has one-third the range or less, said Jessica French, chief operating officer. Moreover, the EV can take hours to refuel, compared to a few minutes for a diesel. And with federal weight limits on 18-wheelers, the 5,000 to 10,000 pounds of extra weight from batteries lowers cargo capacity.

French's truck yard would also have to install chargers, adding to the cost. But dealers told the company they can't sell her a diesel without selling an EV to someone else first.

That means keeping older trucks with less advanced pollution control systems on the road. "We care about protecting the environment and we want a clean environment for us and for our children, for everybody," said French, whose father started the business in the 1970s. "But I think [the state's rules] were premature."

Cleaning up the environment and reducing serious health impacts from air pollution is a major aim of the rules.

In southern New England, medium and heavy duty trucks represent 6 percent of vehicles, but account for 22 percent of greenhouse gas emissions from all vehicles, according to a 2021 study from consultants M.J. Bradley and Associates. Trucks also emit nearly half of all nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, which can worsen bronchitis, asthma, and other health problems, particularly in densely populated inner city neighborhoods near highways.

Those same neighborhoods [also have a dearth of EV charging stations](#). Truckers said the lack of charging stations appropriate for large rigs, in cities and on highways, is a big hurdle. Unlike California, Massachusetts has no fast charging public stations for large trucks and creating a robust network will take years.

At the control center of shipping firm 28 Freight in Wilmington, the charging station challenges becomes quickly obvious. Dispatchers at desks with four or five screens monitor dozens of trucks from the northern reaches of New England down to Newark and JFK airports.

Missing from the screens: a charging station anywhere in that vast territory that could handle trucks of the size of 28 Freight's fleet.

“The industry really wants to adopt EVs, but the timeline is the challenge,” said 28 Freight chief executive Richard Marks, who owns an electric car and says “nothing would make me happier” to see the trucking industry go electric, too.

But, he added, “there is no charging infrastructure for electric medium and heavy duty trucks today in Massachusetts, or one that’s really been built out across the US. It just doesn’t exist.”

Jason Mathers, associate vice president at the Environmental Defense Fund in Boston, said the industry should be able to meet the current EV minimums by selling trucks used for short-range needs. That could include trucks making local deliveries, school buses subsidized with federal funds, and municipal garbage trucks. [Cambridge is buying four electric garbage trucks](#), for example.

The sales minimum is “well within the range of vehicles that are a good fit for this technology today,” Mathers said.

If some manufacturers don’t make models for the EV ready segments, the Massachusetts rules allow them to purchase credits from truck rivals who have sold above the minimum. That’s how the auto market has been meeting similar rules in California for more than a decade, which next year will [require 35 percent of car sales be electric](#) (though the Trump administration is trying to convince Congress to rescind all of the efforts promoting electric cars and trucks).

But truck manufacturers claim the credit market isn’t working smoothly and there aren’t enough credits to cover their liabilities across the various weight categories.

“There’s a lot of practical marketplace, competitive issues in the commercial space that have made the exchange of credits difficult,” said Jed Mandel, president of the Truck and Engine Manufacturers Association.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, which oversees the truck rules, has so far rejected most of the industry’s complaints, making exemptions only for street sweepers and snow plows bought by municipalities.

“MassDEP has provided flexibility to meet the unique needs of our state, ensuring that local communities and industry can get the electric trucks they need as the market grows,” the agency said in a statement to the Globe. “We look forward to the innovations from the truck manufacturers to meet these standards and make electric trucks more accessible.”

Outside the offices of Winn Street Sales in Burlington, about a dozen new semi trailer and tow trucks sit lightly covered with snow, available for sale. Sales manager Mike Igo is worried about what comes next if the stalemate doesn’t break.

“What I have outside, when those are gone, there’s going to be no more trucks for me to sell,” he said.

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