



FLATBED TRAILERS: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

*Knowing what they are can save you time, money,
and a lot of hassles*

We've all seen thousands of them on the highways. Flatbed trailers – they may all look alike, but there are some very important differences. Knowing the characteristics of each type of trailer and planning your transportation needs with those characteristics in mind can make the difference between a successful move and a disaster. Here is some basic information you need to know.

TYPES OF FLATBEDS

Though there are a wide variety of flatbed trailers available, they generally fall into a few broad categories:

- *Standard flatbed*
- *Dropdeck (or step-deck)*
- *Double-drop (or lowboy)*
- *Specialized*

The primary differences in these trailers lie in their load capacity and the height of the trailer bed. Since most states limit the height of a legal truckload to 13 ft., 6 inches, the height of the trailer bed is critical in determining what kind of equipment to order.

The Standard Flatbed. Obviously the most widely available trailer, the standard flatbed is best used when load height is not a factor. The most common trailer length is 48 feet, but some may be available at 53 feet. The bed height of the standard flatbed is generally 60 to 62 inches, leaving 8'4" to 8'6" of height available for a legal shipment.

Of course, taller shipments can be transported on standard flatbeds by obtaining permits from each state, however the permitting process can be time-consuming and costly. Such permits for "overdimensional" loads (over 13'6" high or 8'6" wide) may also impose restrictions on what routes may be driven, hours when the shipment can move, and a wide variety of other safety precautions.

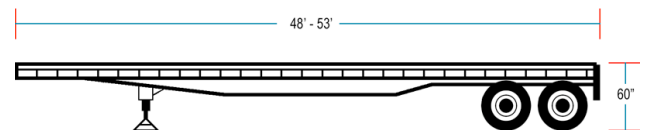
The Dropdeck Trailer. Dropdeck (or single-drop, or step-deck) trailers are also quite common and offer lower bed height over part of their length to accommodate taller shipments. Like the standard flatbed, the most common trailer length is 48 feet, but some may be available at 53 feet. The lower portion of a dropdeck trailer generally has a bed height of 38 to 40 inches.

The front portion of a dropdeck is raised to accommodate its fifth-wheel connection to the tractor. This may influence what shipments can be loaded because this front "step" reduces the overall length of its hauling capacity.

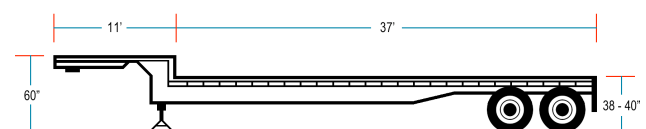
The Double-Drop Trailer. When shipment height really matters, the double-drop (or lowboy) trailer offers more headroom yet. Like the dropdeck, it features a raised front deck, but the middle part of the trailer, called the "well" can be as low as 22 to 24 inches.

While the double-drop allows shipment heights up to 11'6", loading and unloading can be more difficult. Also, double-drop trailers are not as widely available as standard flatbeds and dropdeck trailers; this tends to make them more expensive to use.

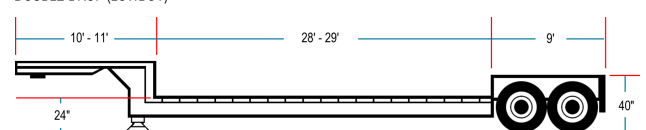
STANDARD FLATBED



SINGLE DROPDECK



DOUBLE-DROP (LOWBOY)





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Specialized Trailers. Of course, not all shipments can be accommodated with these first three types of flatbeds and that's where specialized trailers come in. These trailers come in a wide variety of sizes, configurations and capacities too numerous to describe here. It should be noted, however, that while specialized trailers can be obtained, there are fewer of them available and they are generally much more costly.

We at Entertainment Transportation Network, Inc., can work closely with you to plan your next flatbed shipment, procure the appropriate equipment and execute the move. Be sure to contact us at the phone numbers above or click on the buttons below to visit our website.

REGULATIONS

The US Department of Transportation maintains strict regulation of the trucking industry throughout the United States. In addition, individual states and even certain municipalities have more regulations of their own.

As a general rule, a loaded vehicle can transport shipments legally as long as they fit the following criteria:

- 8'6" maximum width
- 13'6" maximum height
- 80' total length
- 80,000 lbs. maximum gross weight

Some states (mostly in the West) do allow shipments up to 14 feet high, but the vast majority limit height to 13'6".

For shipments outside of these parameters, special permits and possibly more are required. Permits for over-weight or over-dimension loads may restrict the times that the shipment may move to daylight hours only or prohibit movement on specific high-traffic holidays. They may direct the driver to follow a specific route, display special cautionary signs, be escorted by specially-marked cars or State Patrols, or be accompanied by other support vehicles.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The information contained in this article is for general information purposes only; it is not intended to present all aspects of transportation law.

Since each shipment has its own individual characteristics, it is important to work with transportation professionals who either know the answers or where to get them. A good starting place is to know what you are shipping:

- Dimensions (length, width, height)
- Approximate weight
- Content (any hazardous materials?)

With this basic information, you need to know what other services you will need:

- How and where it will be loaded
- How and where it will be unloaded
- Does it need to be chained down?
- Does it need to be covered with tarps?

As always, the professionals at Entertainment Transportation Network are ready to work with you to ensure your shipments deliver safely and on time. Contacting us is a good first step.