By Stan Stamper
Publisher

HUGO — More than 400 Choctaw County men and women were shaking their heads Thursday evening in Hugo, as representatives of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol and the Oklahoma Corporation Commission explained state and federal regulations relating to farm vehicles and trailer towing.

At times the buzz of discontent in the room grew so loud that decorum was lost, but OHP Lieutenant Offotter patiently waited until quiet was restored.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to provide answers to area farmers and ranchers relating to what they could legally haul up and down Oklahoma highways and occasionally into Texas or other states.

Offotter explained that most of the present day laws were on the books back in 1987, but that they had not been fully enforced until recently. He said the laws were largely mandated by the Department of Transportation arm of the federal government.

“They give us highway money and put lots of strings, in the form of regulations, on us, which we must enforce,” he said.

To make understanding the regulations even more difficult, Oklahoma has two sets of enforcement agencies, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol and the Oklahoma Corporation Commission actively enforcing them.

Apparently, OHP deals more with weight and safety matters, while OCC also pays close attention to weights and adherence to regulations concerning intrastate and interstate commerce.

Offotter said there were two significant weight numbers area farmers and businessmen should be aware of. The first was 10,000 pounds and the second was 26,000 pounds.

What might be perfectly legal to haul inside the State of Oklahoma on a farm operation, might not be legal if the trip were to either exceed 150 miles or cross a state line.

Citing an extreme case, Offotter said it was possible a farmer going to Paris, Texas in a one-ton dually to purchase a bolt for a tractor, would fall under the heading of an Interstate Motor Carrier. “You have to learn what to tell the officer,” one of the troopers said. “It would be perfectly legal for you to take your wife to dinner, in some cases, without having to comply with this regulation.”

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