

Trailer Use Safety Tips

As with all equipment careful operation and following appropriate trailer safety tips helps to manage risks and minimize the chances of personal injury. While the types of loads vary, there are some general guidelines that have broad application.

- 1) Make sure the trailer is in good operating condition. This includes the appropriate lights.
- 2) Don't overload the trailer or the tow vehicle. Refer to manufacture's specifications for details and limits when in doubt.
- 3) Typically the 60% to 65% of the total load should be in front of the trailer axels. This balance is important. It affects how well the trailer "follows" the tow vehicle. It also affects the traction and "steerability" of the tow vehicle. When properly loaded the rear of the tow vehicle should "squat" down a little. Too much "rear squat" and/or "front lift" of the tow vehicle indicates the trailer load is too far forward. "Lifting" of the rear of the tow vehicle indicates the trailer load is too far to the rear.
- 4) During trailer loading consider having it attached to the tow vehicle with brakes set and wheels chocked. This is especially important to prevent the tipping and movement of the trailer during the loading of wheeled vehicles.
- 5) When loading heavier wheeled vehicles trailers with built in ramps that support the rear of the trailer when down are best.
- 6) When using ramps use caution to assure proper wheel alignment and prevent ramp movement.
- 7) During transportation, trailer loads should not fall from the trailer or move within the trailer. Therefore appropriate load wedging or binding is necessary.
- 8) For wheeled vehicles, especially heavier ones such as tractors, the tie downs should go from the four corners to the trailer. The sum of the working load limits for the tie downs should be at least half of the weight of the vehicle.
- 9) Tie downs should be in good condition. Ropes and straps should be protected from sharp edges or corners on the load. These serve as wear points and locations of failure.
- 10) Tarps should be secured so that wind can't get under the front edge of the tarp, and low air pressure at the rear of the load doesn't lift the tarp. "Flapping" leads to tarp damage which can reduce its capacity to protect/contain the load.