

Helpful Towing Information

Proper Trailer Loading

Back-end heavy trailers are extremely dangerous. In a correctly loaded trailer with proper tongue weight the center of gravity is just forward of the trailer axles. Too much weight in the back of the trailer moves that center of gravity. In a sway situation, once that weight gets momentum moving side to side, it's a lot harder to control or stop the sway. A general rule is that tongue weight should be at least 10% and less than 15% of total (gross) trailer weight.

How do you know if your tongue weight is at least 10% of your trailer weight? It has to be weighed! The nearest commercial truck stop can help.

Adequately Rated Equipment

This includes everything: tow vehicle, receiver, hitch, hitch ball, trailer and even tires. Exceeding any of these ratings is just asking for trouble.

Tow Vehicle and Trailer Capacities

- Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR)
- Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR)
- Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR)
- Maximum Trailer Weight Rating (MTWR)

Your trailer capacities are in your tow vehicle's owner's manual. Stop at a scale and make sure you are not exceeding those ratings. You should never tow a trailer that is too big for your tow vehicle, both in weight and size.

Speed

Excessive speed combined with towing a trailer is a recipe for disaster. Excessive speed cuts down reaction time, lengthens stopping distance and makes a towed load much less stable. Studies have shown that the faster a trailer is being towed, the more likely the loss of control will occur if trailer sway happens. Slow down – time saved by speeding is NOT worth endangering your family.

Tire Pressure

Under-inflated tires generate heat which can lead to a blowout. Under-inflation makes the tires sidewalls less rigid, which also means less stability. Under-inflated tires also wear out faster.

Hitch Options and Benefits

Although more expensive, a good weight distributing hitch is an improvement over a standard ball mount. Weight distribution helps keep the steering and braking power where it should be – on the front axle of the tow vehicle. Similarly, integrated sway control hitches are an improvement over a hitch that provides weight distribution alone. Not only are you getting the improved steering and braking of weight distribution, but you are now enhancing it with a mechanical mechanism that physically slows or resists the side-to-side movement of their trailer. When all of the other items on the checklist are used, adding a sway control hitch will give you a more comfortable ride. It also gives you extra protection against sway caused by towing situations like slippery roads, crosswinds, passing vehicles, shoulder drop-offs, steep downhill grades, and mechanical problems like flat tires.