

Trailer towing can be safe when the trailer is properly loaded, secured, inspected, and matched to the towing vehicle. Improper loading or towing can cause trailer sway, loss of control, cargo movement, equipment damage, and serious injuries. When the combination meets the definition of a CMV and is subject to FMCSA regulations, follow 49 CFR Part 393, including cargo securement, equipment, lighting, brakes, inspection, and driver requirements, along with all federal, state, and company requirements.



Check Your Towing Limits

- Never exceed the tow vehicle, hitch, coupler, or ball capacity. Check trailer GVWR/payload and consider combined trailer + cargo weight.
- Use the correct hitch type, size, and rating (size and rating is stamped on the tongue of the trailer, size of ball will be stamped on the ball); verify proper installation and a secured coupler locking device/safety pin. Do not exceed manufacturer tongue-weight rating.

Pre-Trip Inspection

- Check tires (proper inflation, condition, and no visible damage), wheel-nut torque, tail/brake/turn/marker/clearance lights, and wiring/plugs/connections.
- Verify vehicle/trailer brakes function properly when equipped; hitch/coupler is locked; safety chains are properly connected and crossed; breakaway system is connected when equipped; cargo is properly loaded and secured; doors, gates, ramps, and pins are secured; and trailer weight is within all applicable ratings.

Trailer Sway and Safe Driving

- Sway may result from improper loading, insufficient tongue weight, excessive speed, crosswinds, downhill grades, or passing/being passed by large vehicles.
- If sway starts, stay calm and keep the wheel steady; do not make sudden steering movements; gradually release the accelerator and let the vehicle slow; avoid abrupt braking/acceleration.
- Follow manufacturer instructions for trailer brakes when equipped. Once at a safe speed, pull over when safe and determine the cause. If sway continues, stop and correct the load/equipment problem before proceeding.

Breaking and Downhill Grades

- Towing increases stopping distance. Allow extra following distance and begin braking earlier; heavier loads require more stopping distance.
- On downhill grades, use a lower gear and engine braking when appropriate. Avoid riding the brakes, which can overheat them. Use trailer brakes according to manufacturer instructions when equipped.

Backing and Maneuvering

- If inexperienced, practice in a safe, empty area before operating on a jobsite or roadway.
- Use a spotter whenever practical, especially in congested jobsites. Communicate clearly and stop immediately if you lose sight of the spotter.
- Do not rely solely on mirrors or back-up cameras—check surroundings before and during backing. Wider trailers require mirrors that provide adequate visibility along both sides.

Uncoupling and Parking

- Lower and properly position the trailer jack. Chock trailer wheels before uncoupling; place chocks snugly against tires and account for the direction of the grade.
- Use additional chocks when necessary for stability. Never rely solely on the jack to prevent trailer movement.

REMEMBER: CHECK IT. LOAD IT. SECURE IT. TOW IT SAFELY.



Toolbox Talk Attendance Form

Supervisor / Project Manager: _____ Date: _____

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE