



Utility Trailer Safety

A list of best practices for loss prevention to help Ohio Mutual agent partners and members identify the most common hazards associated with towing Utility Trailers.

Best Practices



There are many kinds and types of flatbed utility trailers ones that connect by a ball and hitch, gooseneck, or even fifth wheel variants, with or without electric brakes.

Flatbed utility trailers are used for a multitude of tasks and cargo transporting, encompassing a variety of industries, including contractors, construction, industrial, agricultural, commodity haulers, etc. Given the many users and uses, the objective of this piece is to not be comprehensive in terms of covering all safe

practices for a given trailer, rather, these are general rules of the road that could apply to you and your situation.

- Determine if the trailer you're using is suitable for the task at hand: maximum weight and tongue capacity, ample mechanisms for tie-downs, electric brakes to connect, do I have the right mule (tow vehicle), single or tandem axle, etc.



- Walk around and inspect your trailer before you begin the process of loading and securing it. Check tires for any leaks, overly rusted components, broken reflectors or lights, ample tire tread, etc. Refer to the Utility Trailer Safety checklist that can be used as a model for your inspections.

- Consider placing orange or yellow safety cones in front of the tow vehicle and at the rear of the trailer when parked, as a reminder to do one last walk around before moving.
- Remember to park on a level surface and chock the wheels before you begin loading/unloading trailer cargo.
- Consider installing a backup camera or use a spotter to assist when connecting to a trailer.

- Trailer sway is the number one cause of trailer accidents, so ensure the weight is distributed with the heaviest items toward the front of the trailer (closest to the tow unit), over the front, or in front of the lone axle.



- Tie down large items, placing lightweight cargo on top, using appropriate straps or chains that are in good condition. Lightweight items can be carefully placed around the heavy items and secured with straps.

- Tie down all hydraulic booms or extensions on any equipment or machinery being trailered. In most jurisdictions this is statutory but it also keeps them from extending during travel.

- Check tie-downs after the first 50 miles and every 150 miles thereafter.



- Use trailer safety chains, safety cables, and hooks. Plated trailer safety chains with S-hooks (See image 5) connect the trailer tongue to the towing vehicle for security and safety. Self-coiling vinyl coated hitch cables should use durable, galvanized (aircraft) cable

construction. Use your gross trailer weight (GTW) as a guide to determine the necessary chain strength.

- Determine the range in which your tongue weight should be — always stay within that 10-15% of GTW.

- No smoking should be permitted in the tow vehicle, as not only is it a distraction but flicked ashes and cigarettes have been known to lodge in trailer cargo and cause a fire.

