

TRUCKS AND TRAILERS: SECURING CARGO

INTRODUCTION

Transporting cargo is a job that must often be done quickly, but safety should never be traded for speed. All loads need to be completely and correctly secured before the transport vehicle is moved, or serious accidents may occur.



TRANSPORT VEHICLES

Every vehicle and trailer has a weight limit that must not be exceeded. You must become familiar with your vehicles gross vehicle weight, which means the total mass of the entire vehicle when loaded. This includes the total weight of the cargo, vehicle, fuel, and passengers.



Perform a short vehicle inspection before loading, making sure to check for:

- Flat tires
- Working lights
- Dangling hoses or wires
- Trailer or truck is chocked and on good firm ground.
- Anchor points and trailer hitch are both intact.
- Debris, mud, and ice are removed from loading area.
- Loose tools, panels, or equipment are removed or secured.

TIE-DOWN EQUIPMENT

Remember that the working load limit for a tie-down is considered the lowest working load limit of any of its parts or its anchor, whichever is less. Inspect tie-down devices or anchor points for weakness each time you use them. Polyester straps should not have any knots, cuts, tears, burns or frayed edges, and chains should not have links that are crushed, stretched, distorted or repaired. If you notice any of these signs, the tie-down has lost much of the manufacturer's design strength and should be taken out of service. Other recommendations include:

- Edge protectors should be used when securing a load with polyester straps.
- You should know the rated capacity of snap or lever binders just as you would a chain.
- Snap binder handles must be secured to prevent them from swinging open.
- Close binder with an open palm to avoid pinching your fingers.
- Do not use a "cheater pipe" to increase leverage, as it may snap off.
- Chains and securement equipment must be in good condition and used correctly.
- Familiarize yourself with the appropriate number of tie-downs necessary for any given load – this varies depending on the length and weight of the load. Remember that you should secure the load from shifting or bouncing in all five directions: forward, back, left, right, and up.



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ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Blocks must be used with some loads to prevent sliding, tipping, or rolling. Material used for blocking must be strong enough to resist splitting or crushing by equipment.
- Only competent operators should drive equipment when loading industrial trucks onto trailers or using a forklift to load material.
- When the load to be transported is material stacked in boxes, they should be properly stacked and secured according to your employer's recommendations (also listed in the Box Handling and Stacking lesson).

CONCLUSION

If all the proper techniques and safety guidelines are applied, transporting loads of material can be done safely and efficiently. Skipping steps in order to improve speed will only result in missing deadlines and unnecessary grief should an accident occur.

