

## SAFE TOWING TIPS FROM MASTER LOCK

### **There is Safety in Knowing**

Many accidents involving passenger vehicles towing a trailer can be avoided. Follow three key steps to prevent towing and cargo problems – **Inspect, Maintain and Improve**. A little prevention can eliminate load shifts, accidents, tow vehicle damage and trailer theft.

"We've all seen dangerous vehicles on the road and wondered how they can get to their destination without having -- or causing -- an accident," said Jim Recknagel, General Manager, Automotive Group for Master Lock. "But, with a little prevention, precaution and proper equipment, the dangers can be greatly reduced. We created a new line of towing and cargo products to make it easier to hitch and level your trailer, balance your load and tie-down your cargo. Safety is our main goal, and we want to make it easier for Americans to tow safely."

### **Inspect Your Towing System**

- Inspect **tires for wear and tear** and **check the tire pressure** on the tow vehicle and trailer – 40 percent of trailer accidents are due to faulty or under-inflated tires.
- Be sure the hitch, coupler, draw bar, and all of the **towing system components** that connect the trailer and the tow vehicle are properly **secured and adjusted**.
- **Check level of trailer** -- if trailer is lower than ball mount, too much weight will be exerted on the hitch ball causing front tires of the tow vehicle to rise and reducing driver's control of the vehicle. If trailer is higher than ball mount, the trailer will pick up the back end of the tow vehicle, adding weight to the front tires and may cause the vehicle to fishtail.
- Check that **weight levels are appropriate** for towing system. Measure Gross Trailer Weight (trailer and cargo) on a public vehicle scale -- contact local Department of Motor Vehicles for locations. Measure Tongue Weight (amount of pressure the coupler exerts on the hitch ball) with a bathroom scale or trailer tongue weight scales. The TW should be no more than 10 percent of the GTW.
- Check the **wiring system** to make sure all running lights, brake lights, turn signals, and hazard lights are working. **Test the lights** with someone standing behind the vehicle to make sure all are working properly.
- Check that all **cargo items are securely fastened** on and in the trailer, and check them periodically as loads do settle.

### **Maintain Towing Safety**

Tow vehicles require more frequent maintenance, due to increased performance requirements.

- Frequently **change engine and transmission oils** and filters, lubricate components, and check cooling system.

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- **Periodically inspect and maintain tires** on the tow vehicle and trailer, including spare tires. Tires stored outdoors year-round may deteriorate more quickly, so look for signs of aging before you tow.
- **Check for proper tire pressure**, which affects the vehicle's handling and safety. Find the correct tire pressure for your tow vehicle in the owner's manual or on the tire information placard.
- **Have the brakes inspected regularly** on both vehicles. Be sure that necessary adjustments are made and any damaged or worn parts are replaced.
- Ensure electrical components connector-plug prongs and receptacles, light bulb sockets, wire splices, and ground **connections are clean and shielded from moisture**. Lightly coat all electrical terminal connections with non-conducting (dielectric) light waterproof grease.

### Improve Towing Systems

If your towing system is more than five years old, regularly pulls heavy loads or is exposed to salt air and harsh weather, consider **upgrading your towing system**.

Master Lock is the world's largest manufacturer of padlocks and related security products and the leading innovator in towing systems and cargo products. The company has designed and engineered numerous improvements in mounting devices, locks, hitches and cargo systems for automotive and outdoor needs.

Consider the following upgrade items for your towing system:

- An **Adjustable Height Zero Tilt Ball Mount** from Master Lock makes leveling easy. It offers several fixed positions allowing user to easily level the trailer without having to switch to a different size ball mount.
- A **Weight Distribution Hitch** from Master Lock helps balance the weight of the boat evenly across all of the wheels on the tow vehicle and trailer. A weight distribution hitch is typically used with a class III, IV or V hitch. It allows for more control of the vehicle, increased braking control and a level ride.
- Master Lock's **Locking Ball Mount** is the world's first locking ball mount system. A locking device built into the ball mount eliminates the need for separate pins, clips and receiver locks.
- Master Lock's **Interchangeable E-Z Mount Hitch Balls** allow hitch balls to be switched from one diameter to another in seconds, meaning you can tow more items twice as quickly. No tools needed to remove and replace the different hitch balls.
- **Steelcor Reverse Hook Bungee Cords** from Master Lock have the strongest hook on the market, securing payloads up to 248 pounds.

For more information on Master Lock products and more safe towing and cargo tips, visit [www.masterlock.com](http://www.masterlock.com).

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