

ENJOY A SAFE, LABOR-LESS HOLIDAY IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS WITH THESE TIPS FOR TOWING YOUR FAVORITE TOY

MILWAUKEE (August 31, 2006) – With Labor Day just around the corner, millions of Americans expect to fit one last good summer vacation into the year as they plan an outdoor trip with friends and family. For many, that means taking a boat out to the lake, hitching up a camper for a weekend in the woods, or towing bikes, ATVs or a multitude of recreational equipment out on a road trip.

Travel experts are projecting a total of 35 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home over the three-day Labor Day weekend, up 1.2 percent over last year. They expect eighty-four percent will go by car.

But, a new study conducted by Master Lock and Consumer Profiles, Ltd., cautions trailer owners to think twice before they even pull their gear out of the driveway this weekend. Findings show that more than 70 percent of trailer owners admit they are, at most, only partially knowledgeable about proper towing practices and safety. Nearly one third of trailer owners (29%) admit to having limited or no knowledge at all.

“Every year, vacationers hit the roads posthaste around Labor Day. It’s usually the last vacation of the summer, people are trying to beat the road traffic, and several of them are bringing out a boat or camper that they haven’t towed all year,” said Jim Recknagel, general manager of Master Lock’s auto group. “We want people to recognize that these are the ingredients to a potential road incident, and that a few minutes of preparation before you leave your driveway can help keep you and others safe on the roads this year.”

More than 65,000 crashes involving passenger vehicles towing trailers occurred in 2004, jumping nearly 20 percent from the previous year according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association. As sales of boats, campers and ATVs continue to rise, more Americans are taking trailers out onto the road without taking the proper safety precautions.

With this weekend expected to be a peak travel time, Master Lock recommends travelers heed the following top tips taken from the full 12-point driveway checklist located at its www.TowingTroubles.com resource center.

- Ensure the hitch, coupler, ball mount and other equipment that connect the trailer and tow vehicle are properly secured and adjusted. Master Lock recommends its **Locking Ball Mount** as a simple integrated solution to keep ball mounts properly secured to the tow vehicle. Built-in lock design makes it impossible to lose a lock and it’s simple to use.
- Check load distribution to make sure the tow vehicle and trailer are properly balanced front to back and side to side. Uneven weight distribution may lead to a swaying trailer or excessive stress on the vehicle hitch or ball mount.



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- Double-check that your hitch class, (commonly I – IV,) matches the type required for your vehicle and trailer. The trailer coupler should also match the size of the hitch ball in your towing system. Master Lock's **Interchangeable Hitch Balls with One-Tool Torque (OTT)** are a simple way to switch different sized hitch balls for different trailers with ease. Plus, the OTT system allows trailer owners to install and tighten hitch balls easily and efficiently with a single wrench.
- Check vehicle and trailer tire pressures to ensure optimal vehicle handling and prevent hazardous driving conditions.
- Check that all items are securely fastened onto and within the trailer, and check them periodically as loads will settle over time. New tie-down devices like Master Lock's **STEELCOR Bungee Cords** offer three-times the strength of traditional bungees and have an advanced hook design that makes them easier to secure in place.
- Connect and cross safety chains underneath the trailer tongue to keep it from dropping to the road in the event that the trailer separates from the tow vehicle. Keep your safety chains or cables in good condition by preventing them from dragging on the ground.



About Master Lock

Master Lock is the world's largest manufacturer of padlocks and related security products for automotive and outdoor needs, home and yard, contractors, campus, power sports and bike needs.

Master Lock Company, LLC is an operating unit of Fortune Brands, Inc., a leading consumer brands company with annual sales exceeding \$7 billion. Headquartered in Deerfield, Ill., Fortune Brands (NYSE: FO), is included in the S&P 500 Index.

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