

Environment aware

Pulling a trailer with a pick-up truck

Use this guide to help lead a discussion with employees to raise awareness about the proper way to pull a trailer with a pick-up truck. Empower them with strategies to minimize risks and become safer drivers. Use the form on Page 2 to record meeting details.

It is important drivers receive the necessary training to safely pull a trailer. All training should emphasize specific safety precautions for the trailer assigned and be conducted before a driver hits the road. Various types of trailers, hitching systems, and loading methods can significantly impact handling conditions. Drivers should understand how to properly determine the trailer's load capacity and weight, tongue weight, and towing capacity of their vehicle.

1 Know the trailer(s) being towed:

- Familiarize drivers with the weight, dimensions, and handling characteristics of the trailer during training.
- Encourage refresher training or practice (in parking lot or farmyard) for drivers who have not operated a certain combination, prior to taking the vehicle on the roadway.
- Describe the different types of hitches (e.g., bumper hitch vs. 5th wheel hitch) and how they will perform differently when towed.
- Note that many agricultural trailers may not be equipped with brakes, which increases stopping distance.

2 Loading trailers correctly

- Know your gross trailer weight, hitch rating, and tongue weight.
- Place 60% of the weight of the load in front of the axles.
- Trailers with too much weight toward the rear axles can become uncontrollable.

3 Maintain safe following distance:

- Emphasize following distance in terms of time—at least 4 seconds is a good rule to follow.
- Leave more space between vehicles especially if your trailer lacks brakes or carries a liquid load that could surge forward.
- Increased following distance reduces the need for sudden braking.

4 Safely maneuvering corners:

- Reduce speed when turning, especially around sharp corners.
- Trailers have a wider turning radius, so be cautious to avoid hitting curbs or other obstacles.
- Be aware of off-tracking. Trailers rear wheels will swing wider than the front wheels and failing to account for this off-tracking can lead to accidents or damage.

5 Practice defensive driving techniques:

- Apply defensive driving principles while towing.
- Be aware of your surroundings, anticipate hazards, and minimize unnecessary lane changes.
- If your trailer starts to sway, steer straight and take your foot off the gas pedal until the trailer is under control.

For additional information related to driver safety, visit MyNSightOnline.com/DriveThe5

For further guidance, refer to the National Trailer Manufacturers towing safety guide.



For assistance with risk management services or safety resources, contact us at RMSolutions@nationwide.com or 1-800-260-1356.

Toolbox Talk

Date: ____/____/____

Environment aware: Pulling a trailer with a pick-up truck

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Discussion notes:
