

General Hitching and Hauling Meeting Kit

TERMS TO UNDERSTAND HITCHING AND HAULING PROCEDURES

Hitches and Receivers– Refer to the device attached to the tow vehicle which adapts it to pull a trailer.

Ball Mount– A ball shaped attachment that connects the tow vehicle hitch/receiver and the trailer's coupler.

Trailer Coupler– Device attached to the trailer tongue that connects to the ball mount.

Tongue– The arm that extends from the front of the trailer that includes the coupler.

HITCHING AND TOWING DANGERS

Pre-Operational Checks For Dangers

- Check the coupler or kingpin for fatigue, damage, cracks or missing parts before towing.
- Test the lock mechanism for complete and correct latching so the trailer will not come unhooked.
- For ball type couplers, make sure the coupler and ball size match.
- If you are using a bumper hitch type coupler, it is recommended to put a bolt or similar device through the latch mechanism when hooking to the tow vehicle for safety.

HITCHING BASICS

- Try to do hitching and unhitching on level ground. If there is a risk of rolling, block wheels before unhitching.

- Use properly rated safety chains with pins and balls of the proper size. The strength of a safety chain must be equal to the gross weight of the load being towed. Be sure no loose chains are dangling either from the drawbar or the implement.
- Use locking pins on hydraulics.
- Shut off the engine and wait for all moving parts to stop before un/hitching implements or when making adjustments or performing maintenance.
- Make sure all shields and guards are in good condition and properly installed.

HAULING (TOWING) BASICS

Towing all comes down to configuration, with drivetrain, wheelbase, engine, hitch and gear ratios.

- Four-wheel-drive trucks and SUVs are heavier, which can diminish towing capacity. If you don't need four-wheel-drive capability, stick to rear-wheel drive for maximum towing ability.
- Longer-wheelbase trucks and SUVs can tow more than their shorter counterparts, and generally offer better control when a trailer is hooked up.
- When it comes to power, for towing, it's all about torque. That's why diesel-powered trucks tend to have higher tow ratings than their gasoline counterparts.
- Many trucks and SUVs offer different axle ratios. A higher ratio means better pulling power, but can come at the expense of fuel economy. A lower axle ratio works the opposite way.

SAFETY STEPS FOR EMPLOYEES

Safety Chains: All hitches or tow bumpers must provide a secure location for the attachment of safety chains. Safety chains are your first line of defense if the trailer detaches. Safety chains are strongly recommended.

- Crisscross the chains to form an X beneath the trailer tongue so that it would catch the tongue should the trailer disconnect from the tow vehicle. Only enough slack to allow turning should exist.
- If possible, the chains should be looped back to hook onto themselves
- Do not hang an S hook on the opening of the receiver hitch, it might bounce off while driving, but loop it through the opening and connect it to the chain.

BEST TOWING PRACTICES

You're now driving a vehicle that's both longer and heavier than before, you need to take extra precautions. If your vehicle has a tow/haul mode, engage it with heavier loads to put your engine and transmission into its optimal setting.

- Plan your route carefully to avoid impediments that could be even more frustrating with a trailer.
- Consider filling up your vehicle's tank before hooking up the trailer and starting your towing.
- Make sure you've got a roadside safety kit with things like flares or reflectors, first-aid supplies.
- Drive as slowly as is safely possible. Most trailers have a recommended top speed of 55 miles per hour.
- Brake early. You have a lot more mass to stop.
- Stick to the right lane, or slow lane.
- Initiate lane changes early and be patient. Always use your turn signals.
- Take turns wider than you might think.
- When pulling into a parking lot, consider the length and maneuverability of your vehicle-and-trailer setup to avoid getting stuck.
- Driving downhill, downshift your transmission to slow speed, rather than riding the brakes.
- If your vehicle starts to fishtail, reduce throttle input a bit, but don't hit the brakes.

FINAL WORD

Hitching and Hauling are common everyday occurrences on many worksites. Most of the time, they proceed without a “hitch”. The hitching process is fraught with dangers and risk if safety procedures are not followed with precision.