

# Take five for safety

Simple spot checks before you head out could save hundreds of dollars or even a life

**T**aking your time to ensure a trailer load is properly secured is worth the extra few minutes because it helps protect you and others on the road. This guide offers a five-minutes-or-less pre-check of simple things to look for when you are towing a trailer to help prevent an accident.

## Hitch, chains, brakes — one minute

Inattentiveness can lead to improperly securing the trailer to the vehicle. Take one minute to perform these checks: double check that the hitch is fully engaged and locked on the ball or pin ring; make sure the chain hooks are fully in

the chain slots on the tow vehicle and check that the electrical plug is fully plugged into the tow vehicle; take a few

seconds to make sure the parking jack is up and out of the way and that the ramps are fully secured in the towing position; on a tilt trailer, make sure the deck is fully locked down.

## Secure loose objects — one minute

Securing loose objects is a must. It doesn't take much time to tie-down a block or place objects in a toolbox. Take a minute to make sure any loose objects are put away or secured.

## Tires and lug nuts — two minutes

On most trailers, in less than a minute you can check each tire for proper inflation. Trailers with eight or 12 tires will take a bit longer, but new

digital pressure gauges on the market are accurate and fast. Under-inflation can cause excessive wear on the outside of the tread and allow heat to build up and cause early tire failure. Over-inflation can cause excessive wear on the center of the tread and cause the tire to break loose under some conditions.

It will take another minute to check the lug nuts on each wheel. With your lug wrench test each nut and tighten if needed. One loose lug nut can cause enough vibration to loosen the others, and pretty soon the lug bolts become worn. Once that happens, you'll need to replace the hub assembly and that can be costly. Simply keeping the lugs tight can prevent costly repairs.

## Battery, lights and load check — one minute

If your trailer is equipped with electric brakes, make sure the on-board battery is fully charged. The battery cover should be easy to remove and testing with a battery meter only takes a few seconds. Do this each time you go out and if needed, charge the battery between towings.

Take a quick walk-around to see that the signal and brake lights are working. Also, make sure the marker lights are working and that all safety striping and reflectors are clean of dirt and not worn. At the same time, make sure the trailer load is secured and that the tie-downs are tight. Tie any loose strapping ends or excess chain.

## Take five to tow safely

As you can see, in less time than it takes to read this article you can prevent some of the most common accidents that can happen when towing a trailer. Taking five minutes before heading onto the road can save time, money and possibly a life. Use these tips and rest assured that you'll have happy towing. ■

*Information provided by Towmaster.*

