

# SAFETY MATTERS



Safety Matters is intended to promote discussions of safety issues among underground construction professionals. You should always read and understand the operator's manual before operating any equipment. For additional information, please e-mail [safety@ditchwitch.com](mailto:safety@ditchwitch.com).

## TOPIC:

### Transport—PART 1: TRAILER SELECTION & MAINTENANCE

#### POTENTIAL HAZARDS

- Struck by
- Rollover

#### PRECAUTIONS

- Make sure your tow vehicle is rated for the weight of the trailer and equipment. Check the owner's manual for towing limitations.
- Make sure the trailer is rated for the weight of the equipment. Check the GVWR and GAWR.
- Ensure safety chains are in good condition and are long enough to allow for turns, but not long enough to drag the ground.
- In selecting tires for your trailer, buy the size, type and load range found on the trailer's certification label or in the owner's manual.
- Maintain proper tire pressure and replace worn tires.
- Make sure the wheel lug nuts/bolts on the tow vehicle and trailer are tightened to the correct torque.
- Be sure the hitch, coupler, draw bar, and other equipment that connect the trailer and the tow vehicle are properly secured and adjusted. Check tongue/actuator bolts.
- Check wiring connections. Wiring should not touch the road but should be loose enough to make turns without disconnecting or damaging the wires.
- Check the breakaway brake system (if equipped) for damage. Make sure attachment hooks, linkages and cables are sturdy and in good working order.
- Check battery charge (if equipped).
- Check hydraulic fluid (if equipped with hydraulic brakes).
- Make sure all running lights, brake lights, turn signals, and hazard lights are working.
- Verify that the brakes on the trailer are operating correctly. Adjust as needed.
- Inspect tie-down points for cracks or other damage.

#### INFORMATION/FACTS

- All the trailer's tires should be the same size, type and construction.
- Placards, containing information on tires and load limits, should be on trailer near the left front, near the certification label (VIN).
- Tire under-inflation reduces the load-carrying capacity of your tow vehicle or trailer, may cause sway and control problems, and may result in overheating, causing blowouts or other tire failure.
- Tire over-inflation causes premature tire wear and affects the handling characteristics of the tow vehicle or trailer.
- Tongue weight is the amount of weight being supported by the tongue. Too little tongue weight can cause trailer sway. Too much tongue weight can exceed the rating of the hitch or raise the tow vehicle's front tires, decreasing control. Tongue weight is determined by the placement of the load on the trailer. To increase tongue weight, move the load forward on the trailer.
- Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) is the maximum weight of the fully loaded trailer, as published on the Certification/ VIN label. Actual weight is determined by weighing the trailer on a public scale, without being attached to the towing vehicle.
- Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR) is the maximum weight a tow vehicle can support, including its own weight.
- Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) is the maximum weight that any axle can support, as published on the Certification/ VIN label on the front left side of the trailer. This is the trailer weight plus the load weight supported by any single axle. Actual weight is determined by weighing each axle on a public scale, with the trailer attached to the towing vehicle.
- Federal law requires trailers to have taillights, brake lights, side marker lights, turn signals, and side and rear reflectors. Some trailers also have backup lights.

**DON'T LEARN SAFETY  
BY ACCIDENT**

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