



TOWING TRAILERS SAFELY TRAINING

Danny Sapp

OVERVIEW

Each year hundreds of accidents involve trailers that are improperly hitched or towed. You don't need statistics to realize the truth, though. Most of us have seen the results of at least one or two major travel-trailer accidents in our lifetimes. If your company operations involve towing trailers, leaders and workers responsible for this activity need this training.

Towing Trailers Safely is a training workshop that identifies the critical factors that keep trailers properly attached to trucks. The goal is to help participants understand how those factors work together and reduce your chances of losing a trailer on a busy highway.

Danny worked closely with the State and Federal Department of Transportation as well as State and local Highway Patrols in development of this training course. Danny has taught courses on safely towing utility and cargo trailers for years. His audience consist of lineman, electricians, rights of way clearing contractors as well as herbicide application contractors.

If you've never thought about trailer hitch systems, consider the following scenario.

After a long and stressful day at work, I was ready to go home. The drive on I-24 that afternoon was uneventful, and traffic moved along quickly. But that changed when I saw vehicles slow down ahead and merge into the left lane. I soon witnessed emergency personnel removing an injured person from a van that had been hit and demolished by a trailer that separated from a pickup. It would take a miracle for anyone to survive such a horrible accident, I thought. I exited a couple of miles later and headed to the shop to detach the utility trailer I had been towing that day. The next morning I had already forgotten about the accident until I turned on the local Channel 4 news while I sat down for my morning coffee.

According to the news report, officials at the scene said the preliminary on-site investigation found that:

1. The investigation revealed that the trailer was equipped with undersized safety chains and they were worn from dragging on the pavement. That caused them to break when the trailer separated from the truck.
2. The trailer was carrying a heavier load than the hitch ball was rated to safely tow.
3. The emergency trailer brake cable was improperly attached to the towing vehicle.

The ball had sheared in half, causing the chains to give way, and the trailer struck the van, instantly killing the driver and seriously injuring two passengers.

I wondered why the driver of the pickup had been so careless. I put those thoughts aside and went about the business of attaching my own trailer to my truck, and then loaded the trailer with equipment and supplies.

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It turns out that, without thinking about it, the same morning I heard the news report I repeated many of the unsafe practices. Such accidents only happen to others — or so we tell ourselves.

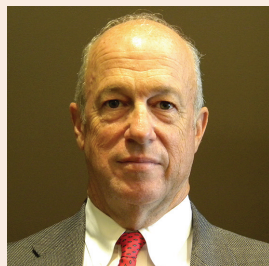
This account underscores an important point: just because a hitch comes with a truck that doesn't mean the hitch can tow anything behind it. While it's easy to load a trailer, attach the trailer to a truck, or hook a safety chain, doing them correctly and safely is an entirely different matter.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will learn:

- > **The basic concepts of attaching trailers to trucks.**
- > **How to calculate weights on a combination Truck and Trailer for safe towing.**
- > **What the terms payload, GVWR, GTWR and curb weight mean.**
- > **How all the parts of a hitch system work**
- > **What to look for when purchasing trucks and trailers for your fleet**
- > **How to properly inspect hitch systems for defects on a regular basis**
- > **The training newly hired employees need to safely tow trailers**

ABOUT DANNY SAPP



Having worked as an Environmental and Safety Manager for the largest public owned electric utility in the nation for 35 years Danny has first hand knowledge of the ins and outs of the utility business.

Danny is an expert in Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), used oil and oil spill prevention and countermeasures (SPCC) training. His written work includes the manual "PCBs Made Easy". He has trained construction crews as well as operations and maintenance crews for almost 40 years. Danny also conducts safety training that involves towing trailers on the highway to job sites loaded with materials pertaining to the utility business.

Danny is an avid bicycle rider and has participated in rides across 37 states in the US and Canada. Danny and his wife Joy are both Certified Arborist and love to deliver programs about trees to gardening organizations and schools. They have two sons and three grandsons.

For more information or to book Danny, contact the Safety Institute:

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