

First Thursday Safety Educational Report

February 2019



The Last Thing You Want to See in Your Rear-view Mirror

It is easy to dodge our responsibilities, but we cannot dodge the consequences of dodging our responsibilities. - Josiah Charles Stamp

This month's topic is one you can relate to if you have ever hooked up any type of trailer behind your car, truck, big-rig, or farm tractor. Research is hard to find on how many people are killed each year or the lost revenue because the operator of a vehicle towing a trailer failed to properly hook-up. Good rules, regulations, and best practices are designed to mitigate the hazard and reduce the risk of a trailer coming loose from a towing vehicle. This month we will hear from a Safety Institute Associate who speaks to companies across the country with the goal of creating safer roads and highways by keeping trailers attached.

Let's hear from Danny Sapp...

It's a good time to stop and evaluate your safety education agenda for your monthly meetings, training workshops, and conferences for the next year.

Working in the utility industry for 35 plus years I know it is easy to get locked into focusing on that all-important safety manual. However, we perform many tasks that may be overlooked in the safety manual.

One clear example is towing utility trailers. After experiencing a few incidents, I realized that towing was not a recognized part of our safety program.



No one had formally addressed the issue. We spent four years training

our employees on all aspects of their work through an apprenticeship program and not one hour was devoted to safe towing.

I was motivated to investigate the cause of the towing incidents my company had experienced. Read about a few that could have been prevented with correct mitigation tactics:

- *An inexperienced, untrained employee was assigned the task of towing a trailer to the work site, having never towed a trailer before. The wrong size ball was used. The trailer came off the truck causing a major incident.*
- *A 3,500 pound-rated ball was used to tow a trailer weighing over 9,000 pounds. The ball was sheared off, releasing the trailer from the truck resulting in an incident.*
- *A truck with a towing capacity of 8,800 pounds was used to tow a trailer weighing over 12,000 pounds, compromising the trucks braking capacity. The employee was unable to stop the truck from rear-ending a vehicle causing multiple injuries. Resulting damage was thousands of dollars.*

After considering the findings from my investigation of these incidents and more, I concluded that anyone responsible for towing must be trained in five major topics before attaching and pulling a trailer. In order to properly mitigate risk of a trailer coming loose or causing the tow vehicle to go out of control, each operator and their leader should be trained and know how to:

- 1. properly attach a trailer to a truck using the proper hitch system,*
- 2. calculate weights on a combination truck and trailer for safe towing and what the terms payload, GVWR, GCWR and curb weight mean and where to find them,*
- 3. set up an inspection program on trucks,*

To view a Safety Training Video on this month's topic, go to:
<https://potterandassociates.wistia.com/medias/qp3paz6kb7>

hitches and trailers,

- inspect all the parts of a safe hitch system and find “the weakest link” prior to getting on a roadway,*
- coach new employees prior to being assigned a towing operation.*

It is important to refresh those holding a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) in safe trailer hook-up and how to properly load and secure a load. Many CDL operators have forgotten or become complacent to regulations and requirements, leading to citations and incidents.

The goal is to educate vehicle operators and their leaders to become more aware of the dangers of improper towing. My personal goal is to ensure operators of towing vehicles know what they need to do at work and home so they will be able to hook-up trailers in such a fashion that they don’t create an incident on the road any time.

What a sick feeling it is when you look in the rear-view mirror and the trailer you were towing is crossing the highway or headed to the ditch. This is not something you want to see happening because your trailer was improperly hooked-up.

Danny is an expert in this subject and looks forward to helping your employees stay hooked-up.

Towing Trailers Safely is a training workshop conducted by Danny Sapp to identify the critical factors that keep trailers properly attached to their tow vehicle. The goal is to help participants understand how those factors work together and reduce the chances of losing a trailer on a busy road. Wouldn’t this be a great presentation for your organization? If you would be open to a conversation, contact Nona at the Safety Institute today: nona@safetyinstitute.com or call 800.259.6209

NOTES



What’s the Hazard?