Ways to properly secure loads to your pickup, flatbed, or trailer

Unsecured loads in a small pickup, flatbed truck, or trailer can be just as dangerous as an unsecured load on a 53-foot interstate semi trailer. When unsecured loads fall from trailers, they can cause cars to swerve, lose control and, ultimately, crash. They also damage vehicles, and injure pedestrians and motorists. Lost loads have even caused fatalities. Traffic jams, extensive emergency department deployments, and large lawsuits often follow.

What an employer should do

• Maintain a written cargo securement policy that explains how to secure equipment, supplies, and materials when they are transported. Provide illustrations or photos for key equipment. List safe driving practices for transporting a load. Make sure all employees have a copy of the policy that they signed after reading. Create a discipline procedure for violations.

• Provide hands-on training for everyone hauling a load. Show employees what you expect, and have them demonstrate that they understand. Not everyone’s reading and mechanical comprehension is the same. Hands-on training is the best way to reinforce your cargo securement policy.

• Supply proper equipment for the job, including cargo nets, tarps, bungee cords, and straps. Provide chains and slings with ratchets for heavy equipment, and provide wheel chocks for stabilizing a trailer while loading and unloading.

• Understand that if the combined weight of a truck, trailer, supplies, and equipment exceeds 10,000 pounds, the driver will be required to obtain the proper medical certificate, stop at roadside inspection stations, and be compliant with cargo securement regulations for commercial truckers.

What an employee should do

• Make sure the parking brake is on and wheels are chocked during loading and unloading.

• Cover any load that has the potential to throw wind-driven debris – like gravel, pea stone, mulch, or refuse – out of the truck.

• Balance all loads so that weight is equal in all parts of the truck or trailer. Unequal weight can make the vehicle or trailer unstable during turns.

• Do not make sudden swerves, stops, or acceleration. Swerving can cause you to lose control. Sudden stops and accelerations cause materials to rush to the front or out the back of the trailer.

• Watch mirrors frequently, being aware of passing vehicles, especially large trucks that may create wind pressure and cause a trailer to swerve.

• Make sure the safety chains are always secured at the ball hitch when trailer towing.

• Never assume a co-worker tied down or secured the load. This is the responsibility of the driver. Make sure everything is tied down or kept in place from flying out the trailer or truck bed.

• Never speed. Speeding with a loaded vehicle is very dangerous.

Your trucks and trailers are million-dollar billboards. How they are used on public roadways can advertise your business reputation and professionalism. Misused, they can advertise the actions of a careless employee, compromising years of hard work made to build a solid business reputation. Protect your investment; train and equip your employees to transport loads and equipment safely.

This bulletin is designed by SECURA Insurance to inform you of important safety measures that can prevent injuries and save you considerable business expense.