



# Tailgate Safety Training for Landscaping and Horticultural Services

Agricultural Safety Program, 590 Woody Hayes Drive, Columbus, OH 43210

## Equipment and Plant Transport

**Objective: Transport equipment and plants safely.**

### *How to Use This Module*

Many landscaping and horticulture businesses use trucks and trailers to transport equipment and plants to work sites. For this module:

- Review the information below on securing equipment and plants on trailers and on safe driving with trailers.
- Ask your supervisor to demonstrate the proper way to secure equipment and plants. Practice while your supervisor observes.
- Ask your supervisor to demonstrate driving and backing with a trailer. Practice while your supervisor observes.
- Review the important points.
- Take the True/False quiz to check your learning.

### Background

Many landscaping and horticultural businesses use trucks and trailers to transport equipment and plants to work sites. Types of equipment can include lawn mowers, both push type and riding type; small backhoes; tractors; etc. You should know safe procedures to:

- Secure equipment on a truck bed or trailer.
- Perform a safety check before driving.
- Drive while towing a trailer.
- Secure plants or small trees for transport to a work site in a truck bed or a trailer.

### Securing Equipment for Safe Transport

- While loading or unloading a truck or trailer, be sure that the parking brake is set and that the wheels are chocked. This will keep the truck or trailer from accidentally moving while it is being loaded or unloaded. For more details, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Chock and Block*.
- Always make sure the load is properly balanced. An unbalanced load can cause a trailer to sway and be hard to control. An unbalanced load could cause a traffic accident.
- Only use a truck or a trailer that has side rails.
- Use chains or straps with ratchet load binders to secure the equipment to the bed. A chain or strap with a ratchet-type binder will ensure that the equipment is securely anchored to the bed.

- Always make sure that gasoline cans are secure and not loose in the bed.
- Secure tools such as rakes, shovels, hoes, picks, ladders, etc., with tie-down straps or bungee cords. Never leave these tools unsecured in the bed or trailer.

## Securing Plants for Safe Transport

- While loading or unloading a truck or a trailer, be sure that the parking brake is set and that the wheels are chocked. This will keep the truck or trailer from accidentally moving while it is being loaded or unloaded. For more details, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Chock and Block*.
- Always make sure the load is properly balanced. An unbalanced load can cause a trailer to sway and be hard to control. That could cause a traffic accident.
- Plants can be heavy, so use proper lifting techniques. For more details, see the Tailgate Safety Training modules *Preventing Lifting and Overexertion Injuries* and *Repetitive Motion*.
- Only use a truck or a trailer that has side rails.
- Use tie-down straps or bungee cords to secure plant pallets or flats to the bed of the truck or trailer. This will reduce the chance of the load shifting.
- If necessary, attach a cargo net over the load.
- If small trees or tree saplings are being transported, secure them in an upright position using tie-down straps or bungee cords.

## Trailer Towing Safety Tips: Before You Start

- Make sure that the weight of the equipment being loaded does not exceed the Gross Combination Weight Rating. This information should be stated on the trailer itself or in the operator manual. If you are not sure, ask your employer.
- Use the proper hitch.
- Check the hitch and ball to make sure they are properly secured. Make sure the safety chains are in place. Lock the hitch with a padlock and bar.
- Check tail lights, running lights, directional signals, and brake lights. Replace any burned out bulbs before towing the trailer.
- If the trailer has its own braking system, check the braking system before towing.
- Check the truck mirrors so that you have good side and rear visibility.
- Check the tire pressure and tread wear on the truck and trailer tires.
- Make sure the load is properly secured and balanced.
- After the safety check, report any problems to your employer.

## Trailer Towing Safety Tips: On the Road

- Avoid jerky starts or fast acceleration. This can cause the load to shift.
- Avoid sharp turns while driving. Normal turns should be wider to prevent jackknifing or curb jumping.
- Never exceed the speed limit when towing a trailer.
- Always use turn signals when changing lanes and allow plenty of distance when changing lanes.
- Always come to a stop gradually. Avoid sudden stops.
- Be aware of crosswinds. Crosswinds can cause the trailer to drift into another lane.
- Be alert when you are passed by large trucks or semi trucks. The wind they produce can cause the trailer to sway. As they pass, reduce your speed gradually. Do not speed up. Steer straight ahead.
- Occasionally check the position of the trailer using the truck mirrors.
- Remember that a loaded trailer handles differently than an empty trailer.
- Always have proper identification while operating a company vehicle.
- Once you have reached the work site and have stopped, set the parking brake and chock the trailer wheels before unloading. For more details, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Chock and Block*.

- If you have to back the trailer, use opposite steering procedures. It is a good idea to practice backing a trailer. Always back slowly. Sharp turns can result in the trailer jackknifing. If necessary, have another worker outside the truck help you back the trailer by using hand signals. For more details, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Hand Signals for Vehicle Safety*.

## **Review These Important Points**

- Always set the parking brake and chock the wheels before loading or unloading a trailer.
- Always make sure the load is properly balanced and secured.
- Secure all small tools with bungee cords or tie-down straps.
- Use proper lifting techniques when manually loading and unloading.
- Do a safety check before towing a trailer.
- Obey all traffic laws while towing a trailer.
- Drive slowly while backing a trailer. Avoid sharp turns.

## **About These Modules**

The author team for the training modules in the landscape and horticultural tailgate training series includes Dee Jepsen, Program Director, Agricultural Safety and Health, Ohio State University Extension; Michael Wonacott, Research Specialist, Vocational Education; Peter Ling, Greenhouse Specialist; and Thomas Bean, Agricultural Safety Specialist. Modules were developed with funding from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant Number 46E3-HT09.

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Answer Key: 1 = F, 2 = T, 3 = F, 4 = F, 5 = F.

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*Name* \_\_\_\_\_

### True or False?

1. If the parking brake is set, you do not have to chock the trailer wheels. T F
2. Use chains or straps with ratchet binders to secure equipment to the trailer bed. T F
3. It is okay to overload the trailer if you are only going a short distance. T F
4. A trailer always tows the same whether it is loaded or empty. T F
5. You do not need proper identification if you are driving a company vehicle. T F