

Helpful Safety Tips:

If you have a friend with you, and you really should not haul alone, familiarize him/her with your rig. If you should become incapacitated, for some reason, your friend may have to take over.

Before you leave for a trip, take the time to check over the rig.

- Check the inside of the trailer for bees and wasp nests, especially if the trailer has been sitting for a long period of time before using.

Check the tow vehicle.

Check and replenish engine fluid levels and wiper fluid. Towing puts extra stress on the radiator, brakes, and transmission so make sure everything is in top working order.

Make sure the ball on the tow vehicle is the correct size for the trailer.

- Check tire pressure in the tires on the tow vehicle and the trailer. Improper tire pressure is one of the most common reasons for trailer sway.
- [Check lug nuts on the wheels](#). Wheel nuts and bolts should be torqued before first road use on a new trailer and after each wheel removal. Check and retorque after the first 10 miles, 25 miles, and again at 50 miles.
- Check the inside of the trailer for bees and wasp nests.
- Check over your hitch, coupler, breakaway brake battery, and safety chains. Make sure all lights and the brakes are working properly before you load the horses.
- When the horses are loaded make sure all doors are latched properly, and horses are tied.
- Drive down the driveway and before you drive onto the road, get out and check your hitch assembly again. Take a look at the horses too, to make sure they're good to go.
- If you happen to stop somewhere where the rig has been left unattended, check everything all over again.

- Driving a horse trailer requires some special precautions. The extra weight will make stopping and starting distances longer, and you will not be able to accelerate as quickly as if you did not have the trailer, especially if you have a downsized vehicle. So drive at least 5 miles under the speed limit and stay a good distance from the vehicle in front of you. Change lanes gradually and always use your turn signals.

Use a lower gear when traveling up or down steep grades. On long grades, downshift the transmission and slow to 45 mph or less to reduce the possibility of overheating.

Always consider the horses in the trailer. Give them time to prepare for stops. Don't accelerate quickly, and make sure the trailer has cleared the turn, straightened out, and the horses have regained their balance before you return to normal speed. Travel over bumpy roads carefully.

If you hear or feel anything that isn't normal, stop and check it out.

Carry an automobile emergency kit with you and an emergency kit for the horses. A [human emergency first-aid kit](#) is also a good idea.

Carry a cell phone.

There is an [emergency road service available called US Rider](#) for people who are hauling horses. A membership can give you some peace of mind.

Remember that if you have an accident, and you become incapacitated for one reason or another, the emergency personnel and police will most likely not have a clue how to handle your horses. In a visible place in your tow vehicle and/or trailer, put a list of emergency numbers for them to call - your veterinarian, friends, or family members who would be able to help make decisions about your horses.

Whether you are traveling one mile or 500 miles, once you leave your driveway you are at risk. By taking these precautions you have increased your chances to have a safe and enjoyable trip with your horse.

Neva Scheve is a recognized authority on horse trailer safety and author of, "The Complete Guide to Buying, Maintaining, and Servicing a Horse Trailer." You can learn more about trailer safety at [EquiSpirit Horse Trailers](#).