

Trailer Operation Guidelines

Scope

These guidelines apply to all Drake University employees, students, volunteers or anyone acting at the direction of and on behalf of Drake while operating a University vehicle or rented vehicle while towing equipment in/on a trailer.

Introduction

As a University driver, you have a responsibility to your passengers, the university, and to the general public with whom you share the highway. Driving any vehicle while towing a trailer is much different than without a trailer. The weight, length, and reduced rear visibility create risks that require increased awareness and extra caution.

Use of Trailers

The driver must demonstrate competent vehicle operations with a trailer attached. This assessment can be scheduled with EHS.

Guidelines for safe trailer towing

Drake allows a driver to tow a maximum of one boat trailer, general utility trailer, or other vehicle behind a passenger or recreational vehicle.

If you are operating a motor vehicle and pulling a trailer, the driver should be extra cautious. Before towing a trailer for any university business purpose, the following should be reviewed and approved by the driver and the driver's department supervisor:

Prior to starting travel involving towing a trailer:

- Ensure that the tow load is within the towing capacity of the towing unit.
- Physically check (not just visually) that the trailer hitch is properly & securely attached to the tow ball on the towing vehicle AND securely pinned so the hitch cannot pop loose.
- Physically check and test that all running lights, brake lights, turn signals, and hazard lights are properly connected to the tow vehicle and that they operate correctly.
- It is recommended that these steps be double-checked by another person.
- BE AWARE of unique vehicle handling & safety considerations when towing a trailer:
 - Allow more space between the driver's vehicle and other vehicles. It takes more time to stop safely so follow all posted speed limits. Consider driving slightly below the speed limit for additional safety and safe maneuvering.
 - Trailer instability (sway) is more likely to occur as speed increases.
 - When towing on wet road, narrow tires on small-wheeled trailers can hydroplane while the tow vehicle runs normally. On a curve, a hydroplaning trailer may fishtail or even tear loose.
- All trailers must have lights and safety chains.

- Certain trailers must display registration plates.
- In Iowa, trailer brakes are not required on all trailers. You must be able to stop your combined vehicles within a reasonable distance.
- To be safe, know the tongue weight and hauling capacity of your trailer and the maximum capacity of the towing unit (driver's vehicle) to be sure you do not operate the vehicle overloaded. Similarly, check and adjust (as necessary) tire pressure in both driver's vehicle and trailer.
- Check load distribution to make sure the tow vehicle and trailer are properly balanced front to back and side to side.
- Check side- and rear-view mirrors to make sure you have good visibility.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts that can cause skidding, sliding, or jackknifing.
- Avoid sudden steering maneuvers that may create sway or undue side force on the trailer.
- Slow down when traveling over bumpy roads and railroad crossings.
- Make wider turns at curves and corners to allow for proper clearance of trailer within marked traffic lanes.
- The process of backing up with a trailer in tow should involve both the vehicle driver and another person ("spotter") to provide additional safety, as mirrors do not adequately cover the range of maneuvering of a trailer. Try to minimize situations where you have to back up. If you must back up, try to position your vehicle so you can back in a straight line. If you must back on a curved path, try to get yourself in a position so that the trailer turns to the left where you can see it from the driver's side. Before you start backing, make sure nothing is behind you. Check your mirrors on both sides while backing. When backing a trailer, turn the steering wheel of the vehicle towing the trailer in the opposite direction you want the trailer to go. Once the trailer starts to turn, you must turn the steering wheel the other way so that your vehicle follows the trailer. If the trailer starts to drift off course, correct this by turning the steering wheel in the direction of the drift.

Use of personal vehicle to tow Drake trailers:

With the proper approvals, employees and students may use their personal vehicle to tow Drake trailers containing Drake property/equipment subject to meeting minimal auto insurance coverage limits established by the Business and Insurance Office. The vehicle owner should provide evidence of their insurance being current and within coverage limits. It is recommended that the Drake University driver (employee and student) carry a \$1M General Liability Insurance coverage in the event of an at-fault accident.

The Drake employee/student vehicle owner understands that their auto insurance is primary in the event of an at-fault accident.