

SAFETY CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST FOR SAFE TOWING, LAUNCHING AND LOADING

You can never be too safe when trailering, and just as any good pilot goes over his safety checklist before taking off, it's a good idea to approach towing in the same manner. The following is a checklist of important items you need to address every time you tow your trailer.

PRE-TOWING CHECKLIST FOR TRAILER BOATS AND TRAVEL TRAILERS

- * Check cold tire pressures on the tow vehicle and trailer. Improperly inflated tires can cause catastrophic tire failure.
- * Turn off all propane (or other fuel) sources and all electric lights and accessories.
- * Make sure you are towing the trailer in a level attitude. If not, you need to adjust the height of your hitchball. If you don't have an adjustable-height drawbar assembly, purchase a drawbar that will position the hitchball correctly.
- * Make sure the lug nuts on the tow vehicle and trailer are tight. Lug nuts should be tightened to a specific torque setting with a torque wrench (see your owner's manual). Do not use, or allow the use of an impact wrench to tighten lug nuts — you may have trouble getting them loose by hand when trying to change a flat.
- * All safety equipment should be stowed in the boat. This includes U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) requirements for PFDs (life jackets), a throwable flotation device, fire extinguisher, whistle or horn, distress signals, and whatever else USCG and local regulations require.
- * The engine or outdrive should be in the full “up” position and secured.
- * If a boat cover is used when towing, it must be properly secured or it will blow off or tear while traveling.
- * Be sure the coupler is secured. As insurance, insert a nut and bolt or other locking device into the hole in the coupler so it won't accidentally pop open, possibly allowing the trailer to become disconnected from the hitchball.
- * Be sure the trailer jack (and all jack stands on a travel trailer) is raised and locked in place. Jacks that are dragged on the road are potentially dangerous, and can also damage the jack, trailer or tow vehicle.
- * Check that the trailer wiring is properly hooked up and working. Have a partner stand behind your trailer and tow vehicle to double-check that all your lights are functioning correctly. Don't assume they are.
- * Be sure the safety chains and emergency brake cable are in place and properly secured so they won't fall off.



- * Check that the boat hull is snug with the bow stop and secured with a chain or tiedown. Do the same with the rear tiedowns.
- * All equipment inside the boat or travel trailer should be properly secured.
- * With the trailer hooked up and ready to tow, make sure all tow-vehicle mirrors are properly adjusted.

BOAT PRE-LAUNCH (IN PARKING AREA)

- * Remove tiedowns.
- * Remove engine support.
- * Disconnect trailer wiring from tow vehicle.
- * Load and stow gear to be carried on the boat.
- * Check boat systems: engine, blower, bilge pumps, lights.
- * If the boat has one, turn on the engine-compartment blower.
- * Make ready docklines, fenders and boat hook.
- * Don't forget to install the drain plug!

BOAT LAUNCH (ON RAMP)

- * Back down the ramp far enough to allow engine cooling water to be picked up.
- * Set the emergency brake, put the vehicle in park, and block the rear wheels. With a manual transmission, put the vehicle in first gear, turn the engine off, set the emergency brake and block the rear wheels. Do the same when

retrieving the boat.

- * Lower the engine or outdrive.
- * Start the engine and let it warm up.
- * Disconnect winch hook from bow eye.
- * Proceed to launch.

BOAT RETRIEVAL

- * Do not submerge the trailer too deep. Most boats load more readily if the boat's bottom can center itself in the trailer bunks or rollers when the boat is about one-third to half the distance forward on the trailer.
- * Approach the trailer slowly, calculating wind and current direction and strength.
- * Nudge the boat's bow into the center of the trailer before winching or powering onto the trailer. Always check local regulations that may prohibit power loading.
- * Raise the engine or outdrive before winching the boat onto the trailer or driving up the ramp.
- * Clear the ramp area as soon as the bow is resting on the bow stop, the winch hook is secured and the engine or drive is raised.
- * Finish tying down the stern, and secure your rig for the road — away from the ramp if possible.
- * Remove the drain plug.
- * Wash the trailer and boat, and flush the engine with fresh water as soon as possible.

