

# Dept. of Transportation: Secure boats, trailers and cargo to get to destination safely

Posted on Tuesday, May 2, 2023

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As the weather warms up and seasonal travel begins, more vehicles will be hauling boats, campers and trailers throughout Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin State Patrol's May Law of the Month is towing safety, reminding drivers to make sure cargo and trailers are properly stowed and attached to keep everyone safe on the roads.

"Wisconsin is the ideal setting for summer recreation but getting to your destination safely is our primary goal," Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. "As boats and trailers come out of storage, inspect them carefully to ensure they're in good condition and ready for the season. An improperly attached trailer or unsecured cargo can quickly become a dangerous hazard on the roads."

Debris on highways and unsecured cargo cause about 800 crashes every year in Wisconsin. These crashes, and the injuries that result from the incidents, are preventable.

Failure to properly secure a trailer or a load of cargo can result in a \$200 citation in Wisconsin. That penalty can increase if someone is hurt.

## **Trailer safety**

If you're hauling a boat, camper or trailer, you're responsible to ensure it's in good mechanical condition and is safely attached to the vehicle.

Before you leave home make sure:

- Trailer tires, axles and lights are in proper working condition
- The ball and hitch coupling assembly are the same size and latch securely
- Two safety chains of proper length and strength are attached between the vehicle and the trailer (with enough slack to allow proper turning)
- To crisscross the safety chains; it creates a cradle that can catch the tongue of the trailer should an unexpected disconnection occur

### **Secure your cargo**

Make sure that any items loaded into a trailer or truck bed are properly secured. Items such as coolers, chairs, lumber, or fishing equipment that bounce out of trailers or truck beds can damage other vehicles or result in serious crashes when drivers swerve to avoid debris.

To secure the load in your vehicle or trailer:

- Tie it down with rope, netting, or straps
- Tie large objects directly to your vehicle or trailer
- Cover the entire load with a sturdy tarp or netting
- Don't overload the vehicle or trailer
- Always doublecheck your load to make sure it's secure

### **Prepare for boating season**

Opening day for Wisconsin's fishing season and Memorial Day weekend launch the unofficial start to boating season in May.

Before operating a boat on Wisconsin waterways, it must be properly registered. Inspect your boat for any mechanical problems, make sure you have a wearable life jacket for each person on board that fits properly and ensure all other required safety equipment is on board and ready for the boating season.

State law requires travelers to clean boats before transporting them between

bodies of water to stop the spread of invasive species that can damage the ecosystems of Wisconsin waterways.

“By removing those plants and draining the water from a boat, you’re ensuring that you’re not spreading harmful plants and animals across the state. These species are often microscopic, so it doesn’t take much to spread them to a lake that isn’t infected,” Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Warden Molly Detjens said.

Before traveling, the DNR requires boaters to:

- Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment
- Remove any attached aquatic plants or animals
- Drain all water from boats, motors and equipment
- Never move live fish away from a body of water
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash

Read more information about boating laws and safety on the [Wisconsin DNR's website](#).

View the May Law of the Month video and news release

online: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/law/lom.aspx>