

Safe Towing Guide

Following are some guidelines to assist with using your Aunger Pro-Trailer safely. These are a guide only and if unsure about towing, please contact your local roads authority for further advice

Driving Tips

Apart from the added legal responsibilities for drivers, towing requires more knowledge and skills than normal driving. Drivers not experienced in towing need to make sure they understand the general principles of driving with a trailer before attempting to tow in traffic or at highway speeds. When towing, drivers should:

- allow for the extra length and width of a trailer when entering traffic and allow for its tendency to "cut in" on corners and curves;
- apply the accelerator, brakes and steering smoothly and gently to avoid sway, especially in wet or slippery conditions;
- allow for the increased effects of cross-winds, passing vehicles and uneven road surfaces on the vehicle and trailer combination;
- avoid applying the towing vehicle's brakes if the trailer begins to sway or snake. If the trailer is fitted with brakes that can be operated independently, apply them gently. Otherwise, continue at a steady speed or accelerate slightly until the sway stops;
- leave a longer stopping distance to the vehicle ahead, increase the gap for longer, heavier trailers and allow even more distance in poor driving conditions;
- engage a lower gear in both manual and automatic vehicles when travelling downhill to increase vehicle control and reduce strain on brakes;
- allow more time and distance to overtake because of the reduced performance of the towing vehicle and avoid "cutting off" the overtaken vehicle when returning to the left lane;
- reverse, if possible, with a person watching the rear of the trailer - reversing is difficult and takes practice; and
- pull off the road where suitable, to avoid a build-up of traffic unable to overtake.

Loading Trailers

It is unsafe and illegal to overload a trailer. Drivers must ensure:

- the ATM specified by the trailer manufacturer is not exceeded;
- lights, number plate and registration labels are not obscured in any way; and
- tyre or tow coupling capacities are not exceeded.

There are some general conditions you should follow when loading a trailer. These are:

- all loads must be correctly secured to trailers;
- loads should be kept as low as possible and positioned as close to the axle as possible with about 60% of the total mass forward of the centre axle or axles;
- about 10% of the total mass of the trailer plus load should be supported by the tow vehicle through the coupling so the trailer drawbar is level or slightly nose down; and
- to avoid trailer sway, do not concentrate the load's mass towards the end of the trailer.

Maintenance

Proper, regular maintenance of your vehicle and trailer is vital for safe towing. See your vehicle dealer or other competent service agent in this field to check that:

- both the towing vehicle and the trailer are in a roadworthy and safe condition

Before the trip

There are a number of safety checks you should make before each trip. These are:

- inspect all tyres carefully. When towing heavily loaded trailers, vehicle tyre pressures should be increased to the level recommended in the owner's handbook or on the tyre placard (usually about 15 kPa above normal). Otherwise, ask your local tyre dealer;
- carry out normal service checks of oil, water, brake fluid, battery etc., remembering that towing places additional demands on your vehicle;
- ensure the coupling socket and ball are the matching size. If not a ball coupling, check that all parts fit and function properly;
- check the coupling is securely fastened and latched or screwed down when the trailer is connected to the towing vehicle;

- check safety chains are properly connected with attachments capable of withstanding the specified breaking load of each chain. Do not use padlocks. If two chains are fitted, cross them under the drawbar before they are attached to the towing vehicle. This provides better directional control of the trailer and helps prevent the front of the drawbar hitting the road if the coupling disconnects;
- check trailer brake and light connections are secure and all lights work;
- make one or two test stops from low speed to confirm the trailer brakes operate properly;
- ensure all doors, hatches, covers and any load or equipment are properly secured; and
- limit the mass of the load carried in the boot or luggage space of the towing vehicle.

During the trip

Soon after beginning each trip, stop in a safe location and make sure:

- couplings and safety chains are still fastened;
- brakes and wheel-bearings are not overheating;
- light connections are secure and lights are still working;
- tyres are still inflated correctly and are not rubbing on the mudguards, suspension, trailer body etc.; and
- loads, doors, hatches, covers etc, are still properly secured.

On long trips, repeat these checks every two to three hours when taking a rest stop.

A final word of advice

When towing, ensure your trip is safer, better planned and more pleasant by:

- scheduling more rest stops and shorter travelling days for long trips because towing is more stressful than normal driving and more likely to cause driver fatigue;
- taking care not to hold up following traffic unnecessarily; and
- looking further ahead than usual to anticipate appropriate driving actions for traffic and road conditions

Insurance

Compulsory Third Party insurance for trailers is usually provided by the towing vehicle's insurance cover. If your trailer is being towed by an interstate registered vehicle, contact your insurer to obtain additional cover. A trailer may not be covered by comprehensive insurance if:

- it does not comply with the relevant states legislation;
- its ATM exceeds your vehicle's towing capacity;
- it is not roadworthy or safe; or
- it is overloaded.

Before you drive off...a final safety checklist

- Is the vehicle suited to the type and size of trailer being towed?
- Are the vehicle and trailer in sound mechanical condition?
- Is the load correctly distributed and properly restrained?
- Are all tyres correctly inflated and lights working?
- Are all fittings, couplings and safety chains correctly fastened?