# 2023 Secure Vehicle Load

## fact sheet

In an effort to keep people safe on the roads, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is reminding drivers that it is their responsibility to properly secure transported objects. Items not properly secured pose a safety risk on our nation's roadways. Objects or debris can fall from vehicles and can collide with other vehicles or pedestrians, causing serious injuries or fatalities. Remember: *Drive Safe: Secure Your Load*. Read on for safety tips and facts about the importance of doing so.

**Statistics**

* From 2016–2020, approximately 16,878 people were injured per year when a vehicle collided with another object while on the road.
* During this same time period, passenger vehicles accounted for 81% of crashes in which cargo was not properly secured.
* From 2016-2020, there were an average of 732 fatalities per year when a vehicle collided with another object that was not properly secured.

**Facts**

* All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws regarding unsecured loads on non-commercial motor vehicles. Additionally, the vehicle’s driver/operator is responsible for its safe operation, including the condition of the vehicle. ‘Safe condition’ includes properly securing any objects or debris that could separate from the moving vehicle, creating dangerous obstacles for other motorists.
* Unsecured loads endanger other drivers and pedestrians, as these unstable loads could fall from a vehicle onto the road. This creates the potential for a crash, as a driver may need to swerve to avoid a collision with the loose items.
* Violation of unsecured load laws can carry state-specific penalties of up to $5,000. Laws state that cargo should be tied down in such a way as to prevent anything from dropping, shifting, leaking, or otherwise escaping the vehicle.

**Proper Securing**

Follow these tips to ensure you properly secure your cargo:

* Tie cargo down with rope, netting, or straps.
* Tie large objects directly to your vehicle or trailer.
* Consider covering the entire load with a sturdy tarp or netting.
* Don’t overload your vehicle or trailer.
* Always double-check your load to make sure it’s secure.

Before transporting a load, ask yourself these questions:

* Is there any chance of debris or cargo falling or blowing out of my vehicle?
* Is my load secured at the back, sides, and top?
* What would happen to my load if I had to brake suddenly, if I hit a bump, or if another vehicle hit me?
* Would I want my loaded vehicle driving through my own neighborhood?
* Would I feel safe if I were driving behind my vehicle?

For more information on securing your vehicle’s cargo, visit (nhtsa.gov).