

Safety Bulletin

5 Tips to Keep Your Freight Secure

You're rolling down the highway. You're ahead of schedule. And then a car stops suddenly in front of you. You hit the brakes. The good news: you stopped safely. The bad news: your cargo shifted.

Make no mistake, improperly secured cargo can create some huge headaches. It can damage your freight. It can lead to you losing income. It can add points to your Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) scores. It can place you out of service. (During the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's (CVSA) 2017 International Roadcheck, 15.2% of out-of-service vehicle violations were related to cargo securement.)

And, in a worst-case scenario, shifting cargo can cause you to crash, cause damage to your truck, and even cause damage to other vehicles.

For all these reasons, keeping your freight secure is in your best interest. Use these 5 tips to ease your cargo securement worries:

- 1. Inspect your tie-downs** – Look for any wear, tear, breakdowns or damage to synthetic straps. Seek out any damaged links on chains. Check for wear in wire rope, cordage, synthetic webbing, steel strapping, fittings attachments or anchor points. And make sure any hook ratchets work properly. Remember, all tie-downs must be attached securely so they won't become loose, unfasten or release while in transit.
- 2. Carry a few extra** – If you're chosen for a roadside inspection, having an extra tie-down (or two) can give you some peace of mind. The general rule is to use one tie-down strap for every 10 feet of cargo, but having extra may keep you on the road if an inspector finds one of your tie-down straps is worn, tattered, or if the inspector requests you need an additional strap.
- 3. Leave nothing to chance** – Cargo securement doesn't just mean the freight you're carrying. It also includes any item in the trailer or in your cab. This can include shovels, blocks, spare tires, brooms, pallet jacks, winches, ratchets, tarps, and even those spare tie-down straps. Make sure all equipment is firmly immobilized.
- 4. Check those doors and mirrors** – Secure cargo starts with making sure all doors (to the cab and trailer), tailgates, stakes and locks close properly. No cargo or tool can restrict you from safe entrance or exit to your truck. And no cargo can obstruct your front or side view.
- 5. Ask yourself these questions** – When you load cargo, make sure it's stable by asking yourself: Can it leak? Spill? Blow off? Fall off? Fall through? Get dislodged? Shift? Make sure it can't.

Learn more: Brush up on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) cargo securement rules. Visit <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/cargo-securement/cargo-securement-rules>

