

Secure Your Cargo (& Avoid the Perils of Shifting Loads)

As a professional driver, you face countless challenges on the road, and you can't anticipate them all. But here's one that's totally within your control: keeping your cargo safe and secure.

Proper cargo securement is more than just making sure every item in your trailer or flatbed is tied down. It also involves achieving the right balance. When your cargo is evenly distributed, you'll avoid the risk of load shifting. It's a serious problem that makes a truck difficult to drive. It can even cause a truck to roll over.

A few ways to secure your cargo and prevent load shifting:

Before you load

- **Sweep out your trailer** so you start with a clean floor.
- **Inspect all securement devices** (tie-downs, ratchet straps, chains, binders, cargo nets) for signs of wear and tear. Replace any damaged tie-downs and be sure to always carry more than needed just in case a replacement is needed while on the road.
- **Check the working load limit (WLL)** of your tie-downs so you don't overstress them.
- **Inspect the load you'll be hauling.** Look for the weight (which should be listed on the bill of lading) and length of your cargo.

As you load

- **Use the right number of tie-downs.** Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) recommendations call for:
 - **One tie-down** for items that are 5 feet long or shorter and weigh 1,100 lbs. or less
 - **Two tie-downs for**
 - o Items that are 5 feet long or shorter and weigh 1,100 lbs. or more
 - o Items that are longer than 5 feet but shorter than 10 feet
- **Use additional tie-downs** for every extra 10 foot of length



- **Unsure of how many tie-downs to use?** Add an extra tie-down or two to be extra cautious.
- **Make sure all securement devices are tight** but not too tight—they should snap like a rubber band.
- **Use edge protectors** to prevent straps from damaging your cargo.
- **Secure any rolling cargo** with chocks, wedges or cradles.
- **Distribute your load as evenly as possible** and try to secure cargo to fixed points inside your trailer or on a flatbed.

As you drive

- **Inspect your cargo** within the first 50 miles, then every 3 hours, 150 miles or at change of duty. Make sure nothing has shifted or moved. Tighten any loose tie-downs.
- **Drive safely.** Take tight curves slowly. Avoid harsh braking. Slow down in inclement weather.

Remember, proper cargo securement is the driver's responsibility. Take the time to balance your load, drive safely, and check your load in transport to keep you and your cargo safe.