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Secure Your Load To Help Make Roadways Safe

Have you ever nervously driven behind a car with a mattress loosely tied to its roof, or a pickup truck with the bed overflowing? How often have you had to swerve suddenly to avoid an object in the road? Hitting it could have caused a lot of damage to your car. Picture that same piece of debris bouncing and flying through the air, smashing into your windshield. To draw attention to the problem and frequency of items falling off moving vehicles, many states have designated June 6 as “Secure Your Load Day.” The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) joins with these states to acknowledge and mark the day when the daughter of Washington resident Robin Abel was severely injured by an unsecured load.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, at 55 miles per hour, an object weighing just 20 pounds that falls from a vehicle strikes with an impact of half a ton. A report from the Government Accountability Office found that unsecured loads killed over 400 and injured more than 10,000 in a recent year in the United States.

“If there’s even a small chance of whatever you are carrying coming loose or bouncing out of your car or truck, you need to go back and secure it again,” said OTS director Rhonda Craft. “Ask yourself, would I feel safe driving behind my vehicle? What would happen if I hit a bump, took a tight turn or had to stop suddenly?”

What is a secured load? A load is secure when nothing can slide, shift, fall, or sift onto the roadway, or become airborne.

- Cover your load with a tarp. Covering and then securely fastening the tarp to the vehicle with rope and tie-downs is good way to help ensure that your load is secure.
- Tie down using rope, netting, straps, or chains. Secure large items directly to your vehicle. Make sure that any covering is securely tied down, can’t shift, catch the wind or pop out.
- Put lighter items lower and place heavier items on top to help keep them in place and secure the heavy items to your vehicle.
- Don’t overload your vehicle.
- The "cram" technique also isn't enough – tightly packed loads can still come loose unless they're tied down.
- Double-check that your load is secure. Even if nothing falls out, an unsecure load can mean a ticket of nearly \$200.

(more)

There are no good excuses for not securing your load:

- “I’m just going a few miles and I won’t be driving fast.” California law is clear – every vehicle that travels on every publicly maintained road must have a secured load.
- “What I’m carrying is so heavy, it couldn’t possibly fall out.” Yes, it can. Heavy items like large truck tires, spools of wire, and large pieces of wood fall from vehicles every day in California.
- “But my load is below the top of the truck bed.” Even with a small load, items can shift or bounce and become airborne.

Take the time to secure your load. It saves lives. It’s the law.

For more information on distracted driving and other traffic safety issues, visit www.ots.ca.gov. Follow us on Twitter at @OTS_CA and Facebook at www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS to keep up with the latest traffic safety information.