

Middle California Region USPC
Preparing For Your C-3 Test
Travel Safety: Trailer Safety Checklist

The following items should be checked on the trailer and tow vehicle every time you tow a trailer, even for short trips.

You may want to copy this list and keep it in the tow vehicle.

On the TOW VEHICLE check:

- Fluid levels: oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid, and radiator.
- Engine belts and hoses.
- Fuel level. Fill it up!
- Tire pressure.
- Examine tires for cracks, bulges or signs of excessive wear. For trucks with dual tires: strike the inside tire with a hammer. If the air pressure is okay, the hammer will bounce back.
- Hitch and receiver: check for rust, loose bolts, cracked welds. Make sure ball is correct size for trailer and is tight. Check electrical connectors and wiring on both vehicles (no loose connectors or broken wires).
- With the trailer hitched, test the brakes and trailer brake controller, and adjust trailer brakes for the load. Check running lights, turn indicators, and brake lights.

On the TRAILER check:

- Hitch and coupling, be sure coupler fastens securely over ball.
- Battery and cable of the trailer's breakaway system. Check safety chains, hooks, and points where they connect.
- Tire pressure and condition of all tires.
- Signal and brake lights, running lights, and emergency flashers.
- Trailer floor for soundness (no signs of rot); mats in place.
- Interior for wasp or hornet nests. (These can appear with a day!)
- Be sure you have:
 - Spare tires and tire-changing equipment for tow vehicle and trailer.
 - Registration for both tow vehicle and trailer, with current inspection stamp; insurance card
 - Maps, directions, and phone numbers if needed.
 - Coggins tests, health papers, and any other transport papers required for horses.
 - Tool kit and first aid kits (horse and human).
 - Auto club membership, towing insurance, or other arrangements for emergency road service that covers trailer and tow vehicle. A credit card may be necessary for major repairs on the road. A cellular phone or CB radio is helpful in case of emergency.

Trailer Equipment List

- Spare tire and jack for trailer and tow vehicle.

- Jumper cables.
- Tow chain.
- Road flares or warning signal in case of breakdown.
- Blocks (two) to put behind front and back tires when parked (the type of block that can serve as a ramp for changing a tire is especially useful).
- Longe line.
- Extra lead rope and halter.
- Sheet or blanket.
- Extra cotton and leg wraps, pins, masking tape.
- Large container of water (can be used for drinking water, first aid, or some vehicle problems)
- Small pail with sponge or cloth.
- Water and feed buckets, hay net (fastened so it won't swing or drop too low) with fresh hay for every trip.
- Broom, shovel, rake, fork, muck basket, manure disposal bags (leave parking areas clean).
- First aid kits (horse and human).
- Tool kit containing:
 - flashlight and extra batteries; screwdrivers, pliers, hammer, wrenches, etc.; extra bulbs for trailer lights and extra 20 amp fuses; electrical tape; extra quart of oil for tow vehicle; crowbar (essential if need to remove center divider quickly); sturdy knife (to cut tie ropes in emergency); WD-40, grease, lubricating oil; bee/wasp/hornet stun spray; work gloves and waterless hand cleaner.

Annual Trailer Safety Inspection

The annual safety inspection is usually scheduled before using the trailer in the spring. Set up a yearly maintenance plan with a mechanic who knows your vehicle. Include the following points:

- Check floor, supports, and braces.
- Check interior for loose welds, rust, sharp edges, exposed wiring.
- Check partitions, doors, latches, butt bars, and tailgate for soundness, security, and proper operation.
- Check axles, spindles, and suspension or springs; lubricate as needed.
- Check brake system and its operation, including emergency breakaway braking system.
- Check coupler for proper operation, correct size ball, safety chains, locking pins; lubricate as needed.
- Check electrical plug, receptacle, and wiring. Use WD-40 or protective spray to protect contacts against corrosion.
- Check balance of trailer and hitch when hitched to tow vehicle; have height of hitch and torsion bars adjusted so that hitch and trailer are level. Riding uphill puts more strain on the tow vehicle; riding downhill causes poor balance of trailer and can be dangerous.
- Check tires for wear, balance, and proper inflation (including spare).
- Trailer wheel bearings should be cleaned and repacked once a year.
- A horse van is essentially a large truck. It should be maintained and serviced regularly by a truck mechanic, who can help you set up a regular maintenance program, with special attention to the engine, transmission, tires, suspension, and chassis.

- If possible park a van or trailer under cover, on a hard dry surface. Exposure to weather (especially strong sunlight) causes tires and exterior finish to deteriorate. Wash and wax it regularly (frequency depends on use, climate, and exposure to mud and road salt).
- Annual inspection, including brakes, lights, signals, and hitch safety devices, as required by your state vehicle code.

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