



Trailer Safety: Protecting Agricultural Workers on the Road

Every day, Georgia's agricultural industry relies on trailers to move equipment, livestock, hay, chemicals, tools, and supplies from one location to another. Whether hauling tractors between fields, transporting produce to market, or towing livestock trailers across rural highways, trailers are a critical part of agribusiness operations. Unfortunately, they can also become a major source of injuries, roadway incidents, and costly equipment damage when proper safety practices are overlooked. In recognition of National Association of Trailer Manufacturers and Trailer Safety Week, agricultural employers and workers should take time to review safe towing procedures and trailer maintenance practices. Trailer Safety Week, scheduled for June 7–13, 2026, promotes education and awareness to help reduce preventable trailer-related accidents.

Agricultural operations face unique towing hazards. Farm trailers are often used on uneven terrain, overloaded during harvest seasons, or pulled long distances on public roads. Equipment may be moved quickly to keep up with seasonal demands, leading workers to skip inspections or overlook maintenance issues. A single tire failure, loose hitch, or improperly secured load can create dangerous situations for both employees and motorists sharing the roadway.

One of the most important safety steps is ensuring the tow vehicle and trailer are properly matched. Operators should verify the towing capacity of the truck or tractor before hauling equipment or supplies. Overloading places excessive stress on tires, brakes, axles, and hitches, increasing the likelihood of mechanical failure or loss of control.

Load distribution is equally important. Uneven or improperly balanced loads can cause trailer sway, poor steering control, and longer stopping distances. Safety experts recommend placing the majority of the load weight slightly forward of the trailer axles while keeping the trailer level during transport. Cargo should always be secured with properly rated chains, straps, or binders that are in good condition and free from significant cuts or wear.

Before every trip, operators should conduct a complete walk-around inspection. This includes checking:

- Tire pressure and tread condition
- Lug nuts and wheel bearings
- Trailer brakes and brake controllers
- Hitch coupler security
- Safety chains and breakaway systems
- Lights, reflectors, and turn signals
- Ramps, gates, and tie-down points

A quick inspection can identify issues before they become emergencies on the road. Tire failures remain one of the most common trailer-related problems. Tires that are underinflated, weather

cracked, overloaded, or improperly rated for trailer use are especially dangerous during hot summer months and long hauls.

Drivers should also remember that towing changes the way a vehicle handles. Pulling a loaded trailer increases stopping distance, reduces acceleration, and requires wider turns. Operators should allow extra following distance, reduce speed, and avoid sudden steering movements. When traveling on public roads, slower-moving equipment should display slow-moving vehicle emblems when appropriate and ensure all lighting remains visible.

Backing accidents are another common concern on farms and agribusiness sites. Limited visibility around trailers can place workers at risk of being struck or pinned between vehicles and equipment. Whenever possible, use a spotter when backing and maintain clear communication between the driver and ground personnel. Workers should never stand between a moving tow vehicle and trailer during hitching operations.

Maintenance should not stop after the trip is complete. Trailers are frequently exposed to mud, chemicals, fertilizers, moisture, and corrosive materials that can accelerate rust and deterioration. Regular cleaning, lubrication, and annual professional inspections can significantly extend trailer life and improve safety performance.

Employers should also ensure employees receive proper training on towing procedures, load securement, and pre-trip inspections. Even experienced workers can develop unsafe shortcuts over time. Reinforcing safe practices through tailgate meetings and seasonal safety training can help prevent injuries and property loss. Trailer safety is not just about protecting equipment; it is about protecting lives. A few extra minutes spent inspecting a trailer, securing a load, or checking tire pressure can prevent devastating crashes and injuries. As busy planting, harvesting, and hauling seasons continue across Georgia, now is the perfect time for agricultural employers to recommit to safe trailering practices and make roadway safety a priority for every employee.

For additional trailer safety resources, inspection guides, and educational materials, visit National Association of Trailer Manufacturers and Trailer Safety Week at TrailerSafetyWeek.com.

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