



Secure Your Load for Safer Roads

Key Messages

- We all have a part to play in keeping Washington safe and litter free. Roadside litter impacts the wellbeing of our communities and the beauty of our state.
- Unsecured loads are a safety hazard for drivers and contribute to litter on state highways. When debris from your vehicle ends up on the roadway, it can cause crashes, injuries, and also harms the environment.
- One of the quickest and easiest ways to prevent litter and keep roadways safe is to secure your vehicle's load before every trip.
- We all have the power to prevent crashes and injuries and to ensure Washington roads are litter free.
- National Secure Your Load Day on June 6th commemorates people whose lives were impacted or taken by unsecured loads and encourages drivers to properly secure their loads every time they drive.

Tips for Secured Loads

- **Stock up:** Make sure you have cargo nets, tarps, ropes, bungee cords, or ratchet straps on hand to secure your load tightly. You may also need tie down hooks or eye bolts as anchor points.
- **Strap down:** Securely fasten large items directly to your vehicle. Make sure you securely tie down any covering.
- **Seal Tight and Cover:** Make sure boxes, bags, and garbage cans are tightly closed and strapped down or covered to keep contents from blowing away.
- **Get organized:** Lay tall items flat and put lighter cargo at the bottom of the load so heavier objects can hold them down. Make sure not to overload.
- **Follow through:** Run straps through and around items – especially large items like hand trucks, ladders, furniture, and mattresses.
- **Tidy up:** Remove any loose pieces of trash from your truck, trailer, or boat that could blow out while driving.
- **Check regularly:** Nothing you're hauling should be able to slide, shift, or fall out. If you hear whipping or rattling sounds while driving, stop in a safe place and check your cargo.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Would I feel my family was safe driving behind my vehicle?
- Will my load stay secured if I had to brake suddenly, hit a bump, turn a corner, or go uphill?
- Is there any chance of debris falling or blowing out of my vehicle?

- If it rains, could any of my cargo break down and become airborne?
- Did I double-check my load to make sure it is secure?

Calls to Action

- Make sure you and everyone in your life knows how to secure their load. Visit our website SecureLoadsWA.org to learn more.
- If you see a dangerous unsecured load while driving, or you see something fall off a vehicle that could cause a crash, **safely pull over and call 911.**

Quick Facts

- Unsecured loads cause 300 crashes a year in Washington and contribute to up to 40% of roadside litter.
- Every year Washington State Patrol pulls over more than 1,000 vehicles for having an unsecured vehicle load and losing debris.
- The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reports that in 2019, crashes involving road debris resulted in:
 - 739 deaths
 - 17,367 injuries
 - 89,915 property damage crashes
- Littering and driving with an unsecured vehicle load are against the law in Washington. Fines range from \$50 to \$5,000. If something falls out of your vehicle or injures someone, you could face jail time too. Some local jurisdictions have stricter laws and may charge an unsecured load fee at their facilities.
- Washington's [RCW 70A.200.060](#) sets minimum fines for littering and illegal dumping.
- Washington law ([RCW 46.61.655](#)) requires motorists to cover and secure their loads to prevent cargo from breaking free.
- Washington law ([RCW 70A.200.120](#)) requires counties and cities with a staffed transfer station or landfill in their jurisdiction to adopt an ordinance requiring people to secure their vehicle loads when bringing solid waste to their facilities and to charge a fee for unsecured loads arriving at these facilities.