



Secure Your Load for Safer Roads

2025 Campaign Fact Sheet

About the Secure Your Load for Safer Roads program

The statewide Secure Your Load for Safer Roads program is part of a partnership between the Washington Department of Ecology, the Washington State Patrol, the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission aimed at increasing safety and reducing roadside litter. Many local governments also participate in this effort and amplify campaign messages in their communities and at their solid waste facilities.

Litter on state highways

- 26 million pounds of litter is tossed or blown onto Washington roadways every year.
- An estimated 40% comes from unsecured cargo and debris that falls or is blown out of pickup truck beds, trailers, and boats.
- Ecology-funded litter pickup programs (Ecology litter crews contracted crews, Community Litter Cleanup Program, Ramp Litter Cleanup Program, Washington departments of Corrections, Natural Resources, Parks, and Fish and Wildlife) and Washington State Department of Transportation collected 6.48 million pounds of litter and cleaned over 18,000 miles of road statewide in 2024.
- Some litter contains harmful chemicals that can leach into waterways and hurt our wildlife.
- The Washington State Department of Transportation and Ecology together spend approximately \$12 million a year on pickup efforts.
- Other state agencies and local jurisdictions also invest in the litter problem to keep roads safe for travelers.

Safety hazard for drivers

- 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
- Every year in Washington unsecured loads cause about 300 traffic crashes and 30 injuries. In 2024, in our state there were 32 suspected or possible injuries.
- A 20-pound object, like a TV, at 55 mph has a force of 1,000 pounds at impact.
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Preventing unsecured loads

- Cargo nets and straps are easy and effective solutions to secure many types of vehicle loads and prevent road hazards
- Throughout the campaign, up to 80 hardware stores will promote load securing equipment through product displays highlighting best practices for securing loads.
- In 2024, Washington State Patrol pulled over 5,302 vehicles for violations related to having an unsecured vehicle load and debris falling from vehicles.
 - Citations: 532
 - Written warnings: 3,917
 - Verbal warnings: 818
- Everyone has a part to play in preventing unsecured loads:
 - Cover and secure loads in vehicles, pickup trucks and trailers.
 - Have conversations with your friends and family if you see them not properly securing their load. Help influence the correct behavior.
 - Keep a litter bag in your vehicle.
 - Clean out any loose garbage that could fly out of your truck bed, trailer, or boat while driving.

Emphasis patrols

- It is illegal in Washington state to travel with an unsecured vehicle load.
- The start of the We Keep Washington Litter Free campaign is timed with [National Secure Your Load Day on June 6](#), which commemorates people whose lives were taken or impacted by unsecured loads and encourages drivers to properly secure their loads every time they drive.
- As a part of the campaign, state troopers are conducting emphasis patrols across the state for three consecutive weekends, starting June 6 and ending June 23.
- Fines for littering and unsecured loads range from \$50 to \$5,000. If an item falls out and causes bodily harm or property damage, the driver could also face gross misdemeanor charges and jail time.
- The largest fines are for “lit debris” — primarily cigarettes — and items that can cause car crashes.
- The Washington State Department of Transportation will have messaging on their electronic highway signs reminding residents to secure their load for safer roads.