



Secure Your Load for Safer Roads

Key Messages

- Roadside litter impacts the wellbeing of our communities and the beauty of our state. We all have a part to play in keeping Washington roads and communities safe and litter free.
- Every year in Washington, items escaping from unsecured loads cause around 300 crashes, 30 injuries, and contribute to nearly 40% of roadside litter. When debris from your vehicle ends up on the roadway, it can harm the environment, cause crashes, injuries and even fatalities.
- One of the quickest and easiest ways to prevent litter and protect yourself and others on the road is to secure your vehicle's load before every trip.
- Properly securing truck and trailer loads with tie-down equipment like cargo nets and ratchet straps prevents crashes and saves lives, ensuring Washington roads are both safe and 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.
- The Secure Your Load for Safer Roads program is part of the We Keep Washington Litter Free campaign aimed at improving road safety and reducing dangerous litter on our roadways.

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. Having the right tools can make the difference between a safe trip and a dangerous one.
- **Strap down:** Securely fasten large items directly to your vehicle. Make sure you tightly secure any covering to prevent flying debris.
- **Seal Tight and Cover:** Make sure boxes, bags, and garbage cans are fully closed and either strapped down or covered to keep contents from blowing away – loose items can be dangerous at high speeds.
- **Get organized:** Lay tall items flat and put lighter cargo at the bottom of the load so heavier objects can hold them down. Avoid overloading your vehicle, which can increase the risk of items shifting or falling off.
- **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 and cause a crash.

- **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 immediately.

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 how a few extra minutes can help prevent and save lives.
- 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

- In 2024, unsecured loads caused 337 crashes and 32 injuries in Washington and contribute to up to 40% of roadside litter.
- 26 million pounds of litter is tossed or blown onto Washington roadways every year. Nearly 40% - comes from unsecured cargo and debris that falls or is blown out of pickup truck beds, trailers, and boats.
- Each year, Washington state agencies spend approximately \$12 million cleaning the state's roads and highways but can still only pick up a fraction of the litter.
- In 2024, Ecology and the Washington State Dept. of Transportation litter programs and partners picked up a combined total of nearly 6.4 million pounds of litter.
- Ecology-funded litter pickup programs collected more than 5.2 million pounds of litter and cleaned more than 18,000 miles of road statewide in 2024.
- A 20-pound object, like a TV, at 55 mph has a force of 1,000 pounds at impact. That's why it's important to secure your load every time you drive, even if it's a "quick trip" to the landfill or from the hardware store.

- 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.

- In 2024, Washington State Patrol contacted 5,302 motorists and gave out 532 citations. In 2025, there will be emphasis patrols for three consecutive weekends, starting June 6 and ending June 23.