

Trailer Accident Survey Yields Tips

Research from the roadside assistance program USRider and large-animal rescue experts Drs. Tomas and Rebecca Gimenez shows that improper maintenance, operator error and equipment mismatch cause the majority of horse trailer wrecks. After three years of study, the following recommendations emerged as key to preventing trailer accidents:

1. Drive slightly under the speed limit, and double the following distance recommended for passenger cars.
2. Don't talk on your cell phone; it's as dangerous as driving drunk.
3. If you have a flat tire, continue on until you find a safe place to pull off the road—even if it means sacrificing your wheel. Then, have a professional change your tire.
4. Replace your tires every three to five years with properly rated tires, and check for proper tire inflation at least every 30 days. Have regular maintenance performed on your trailer, including trailer axles serviced annually or at 6,000 miles, whichever comes first.
5. Always drive with your headlights on, and apply reflective material to the back of your trailer.
6. Be sure the hitch on your towing vehicle is the correct type, size and rating to match the coupler.
7. For safer balance, when driving a straight-load trailer, always load a single horse or the heavier horse on the left side of the trailer.
8. Outfit horses in shipping boots and a head bumper for hauling, and always carry a vet-approved first-aid kit.

For more information, or to participate in the ongoing study, visit www.usrider.org