# Proper Loading and Handling

**SAFETY SHARE COURTESY OF**: Lauren Selvik, TXAPA Administrator



According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, an estimated 25,000 road accidents each year are caused by detached vehicle parts or cargo and materials falling from trucks. No matter what you are carrying or towing, it is your responsibility as the vehicle operator to ensure your load is secure. Even the smallest item falling out of your truck on a highway can cause major, potentially fatal injuries to other motorists and cyclists. So prepare, plan, and load your cargo according to these safety procedures:

**Prepare your truck for your cargo.**

- Use materials such as non-skid bed liners to reduce cargo shifting on slippery truck bed floors during braking and cornering.
- Install a permanent toolbox or secure a large cooler in the back of your truck to keep smaller items such as tools or groceries from blowing out while traveling.
- Always check additional items such as ratchet straps, tarps, and cargo netting to make sure they are in usable condition.

**Plan your trip.**

- When hauling especially large items or towing a trailer, it is best to travel the smoothest and straightest path available. Avoiding rough roads will decrease the chance your cargo will be subjected to extreme forces.
- Be sure to check the weather ahead of time. Precipitation raises the risk of motor vehicle accidents by 34%, according to a recent study from the North Carolina Institute for Climate Studies.

**Load and label items accordingly.**

- Very heavy loads should be as far forward as possible in the truck bed to prevent the front of the vehicle from becoming too light, which makes steering less effective and more difficult.
- Unusually long loads should be secured with a guying line to keep them stationary and should be marked with a flag on the end to so other drivers will notice it overhanging the tailgate and avoid approaching too closely. Always check additional items such as ratchet straps, tarps, and cargo netting to make sure they are in usable condition.