

UREC Vehicle & Trailer Policies, Guidelines, & Safety Tips

Driving Policies

Driving is the most dangerous aspect of recreational programs nationally. Maintain a responsible, serious, and professional attitude while in the driver's seat. You are expected to hold other drivers of the vehicle to the same standards.

- Drivers must complete vehicle training before driving a vehicle for UREC. If towing a trailer, trailer training must be completed.
- Observe and adhere to the speed limit.
- Everyone in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt at all times.
- Maintain two hands on the wheel.
- Driver should be cautious while eating food, drinking water, etc. Intake should be limited to what is needed.
- Drivers of UREC vehicles must refrain from any amount of alcohol. There must always be a minimum of two approved drivers on an overnight trip.
- Arrange gear and people in the vehicle to maintain clear sight-lines to the rear and the sides.
- Driving should be avoided between the hours of 12:00 a.m. (midnight) and 4:00 a.m.
- Drivers must take a break from driving every three hours. Driving more than three consecutive hours at a time without changing drivers for at least 3 hours is strongly discouraged.
- A Vehicle Check must be conducted one week before a trip goes out (if travelling outside of city limits)
- Never exceed the load limits of the UREC vehicles.
- Co-pilots must be awake and alert to assist the driver as needed.

Driving Guidelines

- Reduce speed if driving in poor conditions (wet roads, foggy, cross winds, winding roads, steep grades). **Do not use cruise control** when roads are wet or icy. If rubber/road friction is interrupted, the cruise control causes the wheels to spin faster and can cause a loss of vehicle control. Stop driving if you feel that the conditions are too inclement. UREC Outdoors will pay for hotel rooms.
- Leave radio controls, temperature controls, and navigation to the co-pilot. Radio volume should be limited to a conversational level.
- Maintain a "cushion of safety" (4 seconds or greater depending on conditions) following distance between your vehicle and the vehicles around you.
- On divided highways, drive in the right lane using the left lane only as a passing lane. (It is a traffic violation to exceed the speed limit even while passing.)
- When changing lanes or turning, utilize turn signals.
- When passing a vehicle, make sure you can see the vehicle fully in the rear view mirror before pulling in front. Make full use of rear view and side view mirrors.
- If traveling in more than one vehicle, each vehicle should be clear on directions, etc. in case of separation, specific locations should be planned to rejoin (rest stops, etc.)
- When driving in hilly or mountainous terrain, do not "ride the brakes!" This will overheat them and potentially cause them to malfunction. Slow the vehicle by braking firmly and then releasing and then braking firmly again (pulse braking). This allows the brakes to cool. Shift down to a lower gear (usually second or third gear) for steep grade descents.

Vehicle Accidents

If you are involved in a vehicle/trailer accident, first make sure the scene is safe before responding. Check that everyone involved is okay, and treat for medical injuries as needed and to the level of your training.

- Never admit guilt in a vehicle accident. Often, specifics that led to the accident are hidden, even from those involved. It may not be your fault, even when it appears so.
- Contact local authorities as well as the UREC contact following the protocol in the emergency action plan located in your trip folder.

Trailer Hook-Up Guidelines

- Verify the trailer ball and hitch size match (e.g. 2" ball and a 2" hitch coupler)
- Using a spotter, slowly back the vehicle up to the trailer making sure the coupler is high enough to back the ball under
- Once the ball is in place, lower the trailer tongue jack so that the coupler securely sets over the ball. Secure the coupler latch and insert lock/safety pin
- Using the tongue jack to lift the trailer tongue, verify that the connection to the ball is secure
- Raise and secure tongue jack for towing
- Hook up safety chains and make sure to cross them (this prevents the tongue from impacting the road way if the connection fails).
- Connect the lights running the wiring through a secure pathway to the vehicle plug-in
- Check all running lights, left and right turn signals, and brake lights
- Remove wheel chocks before towing

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Trailer Guidelines

- Trailer check list should be complete one week prior to trip departure
- A person outside the vehicle should assist with hook ups, backing up, etc.
- Trailers are to be [loaded in balance](#), with all equipment properly secured, and according to trailer specifications.
 - a. In general, it is best 60% of the weight in the front half of the trailer and 40% of the weight in the back
- Trailer connections, tires, hubs, and load are to be inspected at each stop.
- Posted speed limits MUST be observed when towing a trailer and widen turns to avoid hitting curbs.
- Maximum speed when towing a trailer with a UREC vehicle should NOT exceed 65 mph, and should not exceed posted maximum towing speed limits that apply to specific zones, regions, states, etc.

Safety Tips for Driving with a Trailer (U.S. DOT)

General Handling

- Use the driving gear that the manufacturer recommends for towing.
- Drive at moderate speeds. This will place less strain on your tow vehicle and trailer. Trailer instability (sway) is more likely to occur as speed increases.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts that can cause skidding, sliding, or jackknifing.
- Avoid sudden steering maneuvers that might create sway or undue side force on the trailer.
- Slow down when traveling over bumpy roads, railroad crossings, and ditches.
- Make wider turns at curves and corners. Because your trailer's wheels are closer to the inside of a turn than the wheels of your tow vehicle, they are more likely to hit or ride up over curbs.
- To control swaying caused by air pressure changes and wind buffeting when larger vehicles pass from either direction, release the accelerator pedal to slow down and keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.

Braking

- Allow considerably more distance for stopping.
- If you have an electric trailer brake controller and excessive sway occurs, activate the trailer brake controller by hand. Do not attempt to control trailer sway by applying the tow vehicle brakes; this will generally make the sway worse.
- Always anticipate the need to slow down. To reduce speed, shift to a lower gear and press the brakes lightly.

Acceleration and Passing

- When passing a slower vehicle or changing lanes, signal well in advance and make sure you allow extra distance to clear the vehicle before you pull back into the lane.
- Pass on level terrain with plenty of clearance. Avoid passing on steep upgrades or downgrades.
- If necessary, downshift for improved acceleration or speed maintenance.
- When passing on narrow roads, be careful not to go onto a soft shoulder. This could cause your trailer to jackknife or go out of control.

Downgrades and Upgrades

- Downshift to assist with braking on downgrades and to add power for climbing hills.
- On long downgrades, apply brakes at intervals to keep speed in check. Never leave brakes on for extended periods of time or they may overheat.
- Some tow vehicles have specifically calibrated transmission tow-modes. Be sure to use the tow-mode recommended by the manufacturer.

Backing Up

- Put your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel. To turn left, move your hand left. To turn right, move your hand right. Back up slowly. Because mirrors cannot provide all of the visibility you may need when backing up, have someone outside at the rear of the trailer to guide you, whenever possible.
- Use slight movements of the steering wheel to adjust direction. Exaggerated movements will cause greater movement of the trailer. If you have difficulty, pull forward and realign the tow vehicle and trailer and start again.

Parking

- Try to avoid parking on grades. If possible, have someone outside to guide you as you park. Once stopped, but before shifting into Park, have someone place blocks on the downhill side of the trailer wheels. Apply the parking brake, shift into Park, and then remove your foot from the brake pedal. Following this parking sequence is important to make sure your vehicle does not become locked in Park because of extra load on the transmission. For manual transmissions, apply the parking brake and then turn the vehicle off in either first or reverse gear.
- When uncoupling a trailer, place blocks at the front and rear of the trailer tires to ensure that the trailer does not roll away when the coupling is released.
- An unbalanced load may cause the tongue to suddenly rotate upward; therefore, before un-coupling, place jack stands under the rear of the trailer to prevent injury.