

## **Trailer Safety**

Trailer accidents are among the most common local disasters. Many can be prevented by proper trailer maintenance and safe driving strategies.

### *Trailer Maintenance*

- Trailers should be of sufficient height and depth for the type and number of animals being transported.
- Rubber mats on the floor and tailgate provide traction and cushion during loading, unloading, and travel. Floorboards should be solid and in good condition to carry the weight of the animals in transport. Floorboards should be inspected regularly and treated (wood), repaired, or replaced (metal) if needed.
- Sharp points or edges (chest bar, stall sides) should be adequately covered to prevent injury in animals. The trailer should be inspected regularly for loose nails and screws, which should be removed.
- Interior lights are useful for nighttime and emergency travel.
- Tires should have at least 0.25 inch of tread or more if required by the state Division of Motor Vehicles. Tires should be inflated to the proper pressure for which the trailer is loaded.
- Jacks and safety triangles should be in good working order.
- Ignitable flares should not be stored in the trailer.
- Hitch welds, safety chain welds, and snaps should be in good repair. The hitch ball should be greased regularly.
- Wheel chocks should always be used in the parking of a trailer. They must be kept in good condition at all times.
- Electrical wiring should be well maintained. Cracked, scraped, or exposed wires should be replaced. Loose connections should be cleaned and repaired or replaced.
- Wheel bearings, springs, and shock absorbers should be inspected and lubricated regularly. If necessary, these should be replaced.

### *Safe Driving*

Drivers and passengers should not throw cigarettes out of their windows because these can be blown into the trailer and cause fire. Animals in trailers should be checked every 100 miles and watered if necessary. The hitch, wiring, lights, and safety chains should be checked every 100 miles also.

A trailer should be backed up by an experienced driver only or with the help of another person. If only one animal is being transported, it should be loaded on the left side of the trailer, and if two animals are being loaded, the heavier one should be on the left. This placement will make towing the trailer easier and make the ride smoother for the animal(s) because of the crown contour of the road surface. Animals should not be tied to unhitched trailers; many animals are

strong enough to pull the trailer away.

Trailers should not be unhitched with animals inside them, nor should animals be loaded into unhitched trailers. Animals should always be unloaded before the trailer is unhitched.