

VEHICLE CRASHES INVOLVING ROAD DEBRIS

We've all seen it; a vehicle in front of us in traffic with a load that looks like it could come flying at us at any minute.

Danger on the roads

Road debris can be extremely dangerous but all of these crashes are preventable. Drivers can easily save lives and prevent injuries by securing their loads and taking other simple precautions to prevent items from falling off the vehicle.

Deaths in road debris crashes can result from the driver swerving to avoid hitting an object. Overcorrecting at the last minute to avoid debris can increase a driver's risk of losing control of their vehicle and make a bad situation worse.

Debris-related crashes are much more likely to occur on Interstate highways. Driving at high speeds increases the risk for vehicle parts to become detached or cargo to fall onto the roadway.

Unsecured loads

Debris-related crashes are the result of items falling from a vehicle because of improper maintenance and unsecured loads. The most common types of vehicle debris are:

- Parts becoming detached from a vehicle (tires, wheels, etc.) and falling onto the roadway.
- Unsecured cargo like furniture, appliances and other items falling onto the roadway.
- Tow trailers becoming separated and hitting another vehicle or landing on the roadway.

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Tips to avoid accidents

Drivers can decrease their chances of being involved in a road debris crash by:

- Maintaining your vehicle: Drivers should have their vehicles checked regularly by trained mechanics. Badly worn or underinflated tires often suffer blowouts that can leave pieces of tire on the roadway. Exhaust systems and the hardware that attach to the vehicle can also rust and corrode, causing mufflers and other parts to drag and eventually break loose. Potential tire and exhaust system problems can easily be spotted by trained mechanics as part of the routine maintenance performed during every oil change.

- Securing vehicle loads: When moving or towing furniture, it is important to make sure all items are secured. To properly secure a load, drivers should:
 1. Tie down load with rope, netting or straps.
 2. Tie large objects directly to the vehicle or trailer.
 3. Cover the entire load with a sturdy tarp or netting.
 4. Don't overload the vehicle.
 5. Always double check load to make sure a load is secure.

PENALTIES AND FINES

Currently, every state has laws that make it illegal for items to fall from a vehicle while on the road. Most states' penalties result in fines ranging from \$10-\$5,000. Educate yourself about specific road debris laws in states you reside or travel in.

California: Vehicle Code 23112-23115, penalty \$200-2,000 with the exception of hay and straw.

We recommend that drivers avoid tailgating and remain alert while on the road.