



Using a quad bike to tow



WorkSafe New Zealand is committed to helping reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities resulting from quad bike hazards. Never use a quad bike to tow attachments which are too heavy, too wide, or are carrying an unbalanced load.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VEHICLE FOR THE JOB

If you plan to use a quad bike to tow, you should consider the following:

- > The maximum tow weight (trailer + load).
- > The maximum tongue weight (weight on hitch point).
- > The manufacturer's recommended load limits.
- > The maximum front and rear load capacity.
- > How front and rear loads will affect stability, visibility and manoeuvrability.

This information should be available in the manufacturer's instructions. Remember that weight limits include the weight of the rider, the trailer and the load.

FITTING AND USING TOWED IMPLEMENTS

If you tow an implement with a quad bike, make sure the combined total weight does not exceed the manufacturer's weight or towing specifications. If you own different types of quad bikes check the weight specifications because they may not be the same.

Key points

- > When towing implements, always use the mounting point or draw bar provided by the manufacturer. Incorrect connections can cause instability.
- > Do not alter the height of the mounting point or increase the towing capacity outside of the manufacturer's recommendations.
- > Make sure the tow ball diameter is the right match for the corresponding coupling. Mismatched sizes can cause the trailer to detach.
- > Inspect the trailer coupling and quad bike tow bar on a regular basis.
- > Do not reinforce the tow bar of the bike to make it stronger. This could have an adverse effect if a bike rolls with an attached implement. Instead of breaking, as it should, the re-enforced tow bar could take the strain of the attachment and add to the force of the roll.
- > Consider using swivel couplings.
- > When a powered attachment is connected to the quad bike, ensure all guards are in place and that the machine can be comfortably operated from the seated position.

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- > Liquid in spray tanks will move with changes in contour and adversely affect stability. Always use spray tanks with baffles fitted.
- > Carefully consider your route when towing an implement.

LOADING AND SECURING

Manufacturers address loading in different ways. Some simply say to reduce towing weight when towing on uneven (not completely flat) land. Refer to the owner's manual to determine both maximum safe tow weight and the extent to which terrain reduces that safe weight.

Key points

- > Never overload your trailer.
- > Always load your trailer with the bulk of the weight over the trailers axle(s). If possible keep the load as low to the trailer deck as is practical.
- > The load on your tow bar should not exceed the manufacturer's recommendations.
- > The drawbar should be sitting on the towing vehicle, level or slightly nose down – 10% drawbar loading.
- > Regularly check your ropes and straps to make sure the load is well secured.
- > Never carry passengers on the trailer.

Towing liquids, live animals, insecure or unstable loads behind a quad bike is hazardous due to the loads changing centre of gravity and can contribute to the vehicle becoming unstable and rolling.

OPERATING A QUAD BIKE WHILE TOWING

Riding a quad bike while carrying or towing loads requires different skills, so make sure the rider has been trained in these techniques. Use a low gear, reduce speed and allow longer braking distance when carrying a load. When riding on hills and rough terrain which can't be avoided, reduce your speed and the weight you're carrying. Always follow manufacturers' recommendations.

It is important to remember that when riding a quad bike with a loaded trailer you should not expect it to navigate the same paths as easily and safely as when it has no trailer. You may need to alter your use of the quad bike or change your route in order to remain safe.

For further information about using a quad bike to tow see the good practice guidelines, *Safe Use of Quad Bikes*, available on the safer farms website www.saferfarms.org.nz

Note: This material has been prepared using the best information available at the time of publication. Information may change over time and it may be necessary for you to obtain an update. This material is also only intended to provide general advice and does not constitute legal advice. You should make your own judgement about action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with your workplace health and safety obligations under the law.¹

PUBLISHED: NOVEMBER 2016. CURRENT UNTIL REVIEW IN 2018.

¹ Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.