# 1922 Safety Guidance

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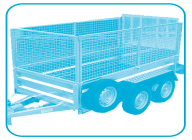
FTH HIRE GROUP

# Twin Axle Trailer

**The rules and procedures in force where people are at work may require the person responsible for this equipment to carry out a specific risk assessment.**

## It is important to read all of this leaflet BEFORE you use the Twin Axle Trailer



1. If the vehicle / trailer combination exceeds 3.5 tonnes and you are "at work" then the tachograph legislation applies. Find out about tachographs.
2. The Twin Axle Trailer is designed solely to carry goods up to its rated carrying capacity, being towed by a road legal vehicle on made up roads. It must not be used for any other purpose.
3. It must not be used for carrying passengers or livestock.
4. The use of the twin axle trailer can cause injury or damage or both if it is not used in a careful and controlled manner.
5. The following items of personal protective equipment is the minimum that must be worn: Safety Helmet when working on a construction site, strong gloves for handling wire ropes, Hi-vis clothing when working on the public highway or construction sites.
6. Do not use the twin axle trailer unless authorised to do so and have an appropriate driving licence. See Driving Licence.
7. The twin axle trailer must not be used by minors or by anyone under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
8. The manual manoeuvring of the twin axle trailer should be carried by one or more able bodied adults. Anyone with either a temporary or permanent disability must seek expert advice before using the trailer.

### DRIVING LICENCE

1. A full driving licence must be held to tow any trailer. Most drivers who passed their driving test before 1st January 1997 have licence categories allowing them to drive a vehicle and trailer combination weighing up to a combine weight of 8.25 tonnes.
2. With effect from 1st January 1997 the EC Directive on Driving Licences (91/439/EEC) came into effect, affecting new drivers passing their test after that date and HGV drivers who obtained their licence after 31st December 1991. These new drivers are only allowed to drive vehicle and trailer combinations in the categories listed below without taking a further driving test.

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HAE HIRE ASSOCIATION EUROPE

Hire Association Europe
2450 Regents Court
The Crescent
Birmingham Business Park
Solihull B37 7YE

Telephone: 44 (0) 121 380 4600
Fax: 44 (0) 121 333 4109
Email: mail@hae.org.uk
website: www.hae.org.uk

### DRIVING LICENCE *(Continued)*

- Vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes (category B) with a 750kg trailer (4.25 tonnes total **MAM***).
- Category B vehicles with larger trailers i.e. heavier than 750kg, provided that the combined MAM does not exceed 3.5 tonnes and the gross **MAM*** of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle. To be able to tow combinations outside this ruling requires the passing of an additional test.
- New HGV drivers and those who have passed their HGV tests since 1 January 1992 will be restricted to towing trailers up to 750kg until they pass an additional test.
- **MAM** = Maximum Authorised Mass (permitted maximum weight = weight of vehicle and / or trailer i.e. the maximum designed carrying capacity).

Examine your Driving Licence and the vehicle and trailer VIN and ID plates closely to establish your limitations or enquire with the DVLA. (Leaflet INF30).

3. Plan how the trailer is to be used to complete each task and try to foresee any problems that may occur so that they can be safely dealt with.
4. Establish that the vehicle to be used to tow the trailer is capable of doing so. Do not exceed the vehicle manufacturer's recommended towing limit, which should be found in the vehicle manufacturer's hand book and on the VIN plate on the chassis. The maximum gross weight (G.V.W.) or maximum authorised mass (MAM) of the trailer will be found on the identification plate, normally located on the 'A' frame, close to the towing hitch.

### WORK ENVIRONMENT

1. To reduce the risk of serious or fatal injury from breaking toxic fumes, do not drive the towing vehicle inside a building, unless the area has good ventilation.
2. Select as firm a surface as possible to stabilise the trailer when loading or unloading.
3. Keep children and animals away when loading, unloading or manoeuvring the trailer.
4. The loaded vehicle and trailer may become bogged down if parked or driven onto soft ground.
5. If the trailer is detached from the towing vehicle, apply the trailer handbrake, lower the jacklegs and the jockey wheel and if necessary chock the wheels.
6. A twin axle trailer is heavy; seek assistance to manoeuvre it into position, especially on sloping ground. To improve the manoeuvrability of a twin axle trailer, lower and wind down jockey wheel until the wheels of the front axle are clear of the ground. Do not pull beyond your own capabilities, seek assistance.
7. Select an appropriate route for soft ground, slopes, holes and trenches. Remember the seesaw action of the towing hitch will reduce the ground clearance and increase the possibility of grounding.
8. Seek assistance when reversing or manoeuvring the towing vehicle and trailer. The trailer will reduce the rear view vision.

### OPERATORS

1. The driver of the towing vehicle has the responsibility for the safe operation of the towing vehicle and trailer.
2. The driver of the towing vehicle must establish that the vehicle is capable of towing the trailer safely. The vehicle manufacturer's recommended towing limit, which is found in vehicle manufacturer's handbook and on the VIN plate on the chassis, must not be exceeded. The maximum gross weight (G.V.W.) of the trailer will be found on the identification plate, normally located in the 'A' frame, close to the towing hitch.
3. If the trailer is left unattended ensure it is protected from theft with either a hitch lock, wheel clamp or other suitable security device.
4. The Driver of the Towing Vehicle should carry out the following checks each time the trailer is used. It will have been supplied in good condition and ready for use by the hire company. Ensure that it has not been damaged or altered since then.
   - Are all the lights undamaged?
   - Is the correct number plate fitted? (both registration number and style)
   - is the breakaway cable or secondary coupling undamaged and correctly connected to the trailer handbrake mechanism?
   - Are the tyre pressures correct (seek advice from the Hire Company) and all tyres free from cuts, bulges and with adequate tread (including the spare)? Tyres must have a continuous tread depth of at least 1.6mm on cars, light vans and trailers, across the centre three-quarters of the width (1mm for other vehicles)
   - Are you satisfied the wheel nuts / bolts are tightened to the correct torque?
   - If required are the mudguards in satisfactory condition and secure?
   - Is the trailer tow ball or pin in good condition?
   - Is the jockey wheel and any corner steadies or support legs in good condition, fully raised and secure and before moving?

### TWIN AXLE TRAILER

1. Check the twin axle trailer thoroughly. If anything is found to be damaged, do not use the trailer. Contact the hire company immediately. Ensure the trailer hitch is compatible with the towing vehicle – it will be either a 50mm ball or an eye coupling.
2. If the trailer is to be detached from the towing vehicle, always apply the hand brake, lower the jockey wheel and support legs. It may also be necessary to chock the wheels in some circumstances.
3. If the trailer is left unattended ensure it is protected from theft with either a hitch lock, wheel clamp or other suitable security device.
4. The Driver of the Towing Vehicle should carry out the following checks each time the trailer is used. It will have been supplied in good condition and ready for use by the hire company. Ensure that it has not been damaged or altered since then.
   - Are all the lights undamaged?
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   - is the breakaway cable or secondary coupling undamaged and correctly connected to the trailer handbrake mechanism?
   - Are the tyre pressures correct (seek advice from the Hire Company) and all tyres free from cuts, bulges and with adequate tread (including the spare)? Tyres must have a continuous tread depth of at least 1.6mm on cars, light vans and trailers, across the centre three-quarters of the width (1mm for other vehicles)
   - Are you satisfied the wheel nuts / bolts are tightened to the correct torque?
   - If required are the mudguards in satisfactory condition and secure?
   - Is the trailer tow ball or pin in good condition?
   - Is the jockey wheel and any corner steadies or support legs in good condition, fully raised and secure and before moving?

### INSURANCE

1. Under the terms of hire, the hirer is responsible for the safe custody of the twin axle trailer. The hire company must also be indemnified against any loss or damage however caused. The best way to do this is to take out proper insurance.
2. Some hire companies will offer insurance cover at an extra charge.
3. Establish with the insurers of the towing vehicle that the hirer is insured to tow a trailer.
4. Any damage caused to property belonging to a third party, or if involved in a road traffic accident is the responsibility of the hirer.
5. If in any doubt about insurance cover, check with the hire company or insurer immediately.

### LOADING THE TWIN AXLE TRAILER

1. Great care should be taken when loading the trailer; poor loading can cause significant risks including:
   - Overloading of the rear of the trailer will lighten the front of the trailer and the rear of the towing vehicle causing loss of stability and likely to cause snaking.
   - Overloading the front of the trailer will lighten the rear of the trailer and the front of the towing vehicle, causing the towing vehicle's steering to be extremely light and less effective and lose traction. This excessive nose weight is also likely to place unacceptable stresses on the tow bar and on mounting points.
   - Stability can be lost if loads are heavier on one side or the other.
   - If loads are left loose and can move around, the sudden change of weight distribution can cause a dangerous loss of stability. In addition it is possible that part of the load can fall from the trailer endangering other road users and pedestrians.
2. Loads must be securely tied down or restrained. There is a significant danger of slipstream. All items should be secured using adequate strength load restraints attached to purpose made restraint points on the chassis of the trailer. Do not attach restraints to part of the body work or mudguards that are not designed to carry the weight of the load. A net is useful to restrain small items.
3. Loads must not project outside the trailer causing danger to other road users.
4. Loads should be evenly distributed across the width of the trailer.
5. Loads must be positioned to keep the nose weight (the downward weight on the tow bar) within the recommended limits (typically between 50 and 100 KG). Refer to the towing vehicles handbook for the manufacturer's recommendation.
6. If uneven loads have to be carried, ensure that individual wheels / axles are not overloaded. It may be necessary to reduce the overall load to achieve this.
7. The tailgate of the trailer can be extremely heavy. Take care and perhaps seek assistance when raising or lowering it.

### LOADING A FREE STANDING TWIN AXLE TRAILER

1. Before loading an unhitched trailer consider that it will be considerably more difficult to move when fully loaded. Place it where it can easily be moved or where the towing vehicle can easily reverse to the hitch.
2. Always apply the handbrake. In addition it may be necessary to chock the wheels on slopes.
3. An unhitched trailer can seesaw, pivoting on the wheels during loading. To prevent this from happening lower the jockey wheel to a position where the trailer is level and then lower the rear support legs to the ground and firmly apply the clamps.
4. When a trailer is required to be moved manually, raise and securely clamp the rear support legs leaving the jockey wheel down. A twin axle trailer is heavy; ask for assistance to manoeuvre it into position, especially on sloping ground. To improve the manoeuvrability of a twin axle trailer lower and wind down the jockey wheel until the wheels of the front axle are clear of the ground. Do not pull beyond your own capabilities, ask for assistance.

*(Continued overleaf...)*

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*For guidance on managing construction health risks go to*
**www.hse.gov.uk/construction**

- A yellow reflective vehicle registration plate.

5. Adjust both external mirrors so that a view down both sides of the trailer can be achieved or fit extension mirrors.

### USING THE TWIN AXLE TRAILER

1. The addition of a loaded trailer to a vehicle will inevitably have a very serious effect on the vehicle's performance:
   - Starting, particularly on hills will be more difficult
   - Stopping can take longer distances
   - Cornering and negotiating sharp bends requires extra care
   - The rate of acceleration will be reduced
   - Fuel consumption will be increased.
2. Driving style will need to be modified. The reduced performance mentioned above will require:
   - Greater concentration
   - The additional length will require greater care when overtaking and cornering
   - Reduced acceleration will require longer distances required when overtaking
   - The effect of side winds will be more noticeable
   - The slipstream and suction effect of large commercial vehicles can affect the stability of the vehicle.
3. Speed limits and limitations when towing: Do not exceed the speed limits – these are maximum speeds allowed and are not necessarily safe speeds.
   - 30 mph limit applies on all roads with street lighting unless signs show otherwise
   - On other roads the speed limit is 50 mph on a single carriageway and 60 mph on dual carriageways and motorways for general vehicles under 7.5 tonnes
   - The speed limits may be different for vehicles over 7.5 tonnes, articulated vehicles and other unusual vehicles, check the speed limit for the vehicle before driving
   - Do not travel in the right-hand lane of a motorway with three lanes or more
   - Drive at a speed that is well within the capabilities of the vehicle, the driver and to the road and weather conditions
   - Should the trailer start to snake or swerve (usually caused by excessive speed) ease off the accelerator and reduce speed gently.
   - Reversing will require practice but always get out of the vehicle to check any blind spots or seek assistance.
4. If the maximum authorised mass (the combined maximum designed carrying capacity of towing vehicle and trailer) exceeds 3500 KG and the vehicle is used for hire or reward or for the commercial carriage of goods a tachograph must be used. The driver of the towing vehicle in these circumstances must comply with the Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles in the UK and Europe. These rules can be obtained from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (www.vosa.gov.uk).
5. If the trailer does not work properly do not attempt to repair it. Contact the hire company.

***Please store this leaflet safely. It may be required for further information***

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HAE HIRE ASSOCIATION EUROPE

Hire Association Europe
2450 Regents Court
The Crescent
Birmingham Business Park
Solihull B37 7YE

Telephone: 44 (0) 121 380 4600
Fax: 44 (0) 121 333 4109
Email: mail@hae.org.uk
website: www.hae.org.uk

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### LOADING A HITCHED TWIN AXLE TRAILER

1. Always apply the towing vehicle handbrake.
2. A hitched trailer is considerably more stable than when unhitched. The jockey wheel must be left raised. Lower the rear support legs to maintain a constant height during loading.

### HITCHING A TWIN AXLE TRAILER

1. Take time, do not hurry. Work to a routine or from a check list to ensure nothing is forgotten.

### TOWBALL HITCH

1. Apply the trailer handbrake and check the support legs are raised. Remove any tow ball and electrical socket dust covers and security devices then wind the jockey wheel to the required height. Some older tow ball hitches require lubrication – check with the hire company.
2. If the towing vehicle mirrors do not give a good view past the trailer – fit towing mirrors.
3. Seek assistance to guide to the hitch (place a pole or cane against it if alone).
4. Raise the front of the trailer by means of the jockey wheel assembly to a height just above the tow ball.
5. Lower the trailer by means of the jockey wheel assembly onto the tow ball of the towing vehicle.
6. Some towing hitches have a locking handle which stays up and will automatically lock onto the ball as the hitch is engaged onto the ball, others have to be held up and may have an indicator to show when the ball is in place.
7. Once the hitch appears to have locked on, wind down the jockey wheel a few turns to lift the hitch. If the rear of the vehicle rises, the hitch is fully locked onto the tow ball.

### EYE COUPLING

1. Apply the trailer handbrake and check the support legs are raised.
2. Position the eye into the jaws of the coupling. Insert the pin through the jaws and eye making sure that the safety locking catch on the towing pin is properly applied and the safety pin or clip is fitted.

### BOTH COUPLINGS

1. Wind the jockey wheel completely up, slacken the clamp, and lift the complete jockey wheel unit to the fully raised position and securely tighten the clamp. Check it is not fouling the brake mechanism.
2. Attach safety breakaway cable onto the special rings most tow bars have or loop it around the tow bar, ensuring it cannot foul the towing hitch. Ensure the cable has enough slack for corner but does not touch the ground. The cable will apply the hand brake should the trailer become detached while towing.
3. Insert the lighting plug into the socket situated close to the tow bar. If the towing vehicle has two sockets, use the one with the black cover flap. The plug will only fit one way, with the keyway and groove at the bottom.
4. The driver must check the correct operation of the following trailer lights:
   - Two red sidelights
   - Correct operation of directional indicators
   - Number plate illumination light
   - Two brake lights
   - One high intensity red fog light (a legal requirement on trailers over 1.3m wide)

   In addition the trailer must have:
   - Two red reflective triangles

## Before Starting Work...

## Useful Reference Points • www.hae.org.uk/businessguard