

Safety Matters **Landscaping**

Provided by: SCS Agency Inc

Transporting Equipment

Many landscaping tasks require the transportation of equipment and tools between job sites. As such, it's important to secure these loads before transporting them to prevent safety incidents.

After all, failure to properly secure a load could cause the equipment to shift or even fall off of the vehicle and onto the road during transportation. This could result in damaged equipment, hefty traffic fines and severe injury (or even death) to employees, other motorists or pedestrians.

Whether you're transporting equipment just down the street or for an extended distance, be sure to follow this load securement guidance to keep yourself, the equipment being transported and others safe on the road.

Use the Correct Equipment

First, it's crucial that you have the correct vehicle, systems and equipment in place to effectively secure a load. This includes:

- **The right vehicle**—Only use a vehicle that is capable of transporting landscaping equipment—such as a cargo van, pickup truck or trailer. If you are unsure whether a company vehicle can be used for transporting loads, ask your supervisor.
- **A securement system**—Such a system consists of a group of individual parts that work together to support and secure a load. Common securement system parts include decks, headboards, bulkheads, stakes, posts and anchor points.
- **Securing devices**—These devices are designed to help hold a load in place during transportation. Securing devices can include webbing, strapping, bracing, blocking, chains, ropes, binders, shackles, clamps, latches, hooks and friction mats.
- **Tie-downs**—Such items are a combination of securing devices that form an assembly that attaches to anchor points to restrain loads during transportation.

Conduct Thorough Inspections

Apart from having the correct equipment, it's vital to inspect this equipment and the load itself to ensure that safe and effective securement is possible. Utilize the following inspection tips:

- Make sure that the vehicle, securement system, securing devices, tie-downs and equipment in the load itself are fully cleaned and don't contain any excess debris (e.g., dirt, rocks or grass).
- Ensure that the vehicle is in good condition, paying special attention to the fluid levels, brakes, seat belts, steering wheels and tires. Never use a vehicle in poor condition.
- Analyze the securement system, securing devices and tie-downs for missing components, weakened parts or sections,



signs of distress (e.g., stretches, cracks or frays) or other potential damages. Never use damaged equipment.

- Review the size, dimensions and weight of the equipment in your load. Ensure that these measurements don't exceed the vehicle's maximum capacity or any part of the securement system's working load limit (WLL). Each component of the securement system should include a WLL from the manufacturer.
- Ensure that you are using an adequate securement system, suitable securing devices and the [required number of tie-downs](#) to effectively restrain the load.
- Keep in mind that some large equipment might require oversized or overweight transportation permits. The standards for these permits can vary between states. Consult your supervisor to determine whether any part of the load requires a specialized permit.

Contain, Immobilize and Secure the Load

Once you have inspected your equipment and confirmed that the load is a suitable size and weight for the vehicle being used, it's time to secure the load. Follow these steps:

- Before loading begins, be sure that the vehicle being used for transportation has the parking brake engaged. This will keep the vehicle from rolling away during the loading process.
- Utilize a securement system plan that suits the unique characteristics of the load. This plan should properly distribute the weight of the load throughout the vehicle and be able to withstand a [minimum amount of force](#) in

each direction.

- Make sure that the setup of the securement system, securing devices, tie-downs and equipment in the load itself won't compromise the safety of the driver or any vehicle passengers. Specifically, ensure that the setup won't block the driver's view, prevent the driver from freely moving their legs or arms, restrict the driver from accessing emergency materials (e.g., a first-aid kit or toolbox) or keep the driver and any passengers from being able to safely exit the vehicle.
- Take extra precaution when securing articulated landscaping equipment or any other form of equipment that is more likely to shift during transportation (e.g., equipment with wheels). Be sure to utilize extra securing devices (e.g., straps and wheel blocks) to further immobilize the equipment. This is especially important for equipment that has attached accessories.

Ensure Compliance

Lastly, make sure that all load securement procedures are compliant with any applicable federal, state and local laws. Remember to review both the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) [requirements](#) and your specific state's DOT regulations regarding load securement. Consult your supervisor with any compliance concerns.

In Conclusion

Keep in mind that this article is just a brief overview of load securement safety. Be sure to review additional resources and talk to your supervisor you have any further questions regarding load securement.