

# Safe Operating Procedure – Tow Vehicle

## 1. Pre-Operational Checks

Before starting any journey, perform a thorough "walk-around" inspection to confirm the vehicle is roadworthy.

- **Mechanical Integrity:** Check oil, fuel, and water levels, as well as the compressed air braking system.
- **Tyres & Wheels:** Inspect tyre tread, inflation pressure, and ensure wheel nuts are secure.
- **Visibility:** Clean the windscreen and all mirrors; ensure mirrors are adjusted to minimize blind spots.
- **Lights & Equipment:** Test headlights, brake lights, indicators, wipers, and the horn.
- **Documentation:** Verify current registration, Warrant of Fitness (WoF) or Certificate of Fitness (CoF), and logbooks.

## 2. Loading and Securing Cargo

Improperly secured loads are a major cause of transport accidents.

- **Stability:** Arrange cargo to distribute weight evenly and avoid overhanging where possible. Use a red flag (at least 300mm square) for any rear overhang exceeding 300mm.
- **Restraint:** Use appropriate chains, straps, or carry boxes to prevent the load from shifting in any direction.
- **Regular Inspections:** Re-check load security after the first few kilometres, after driving on uneven surfaces, and at every rest stop.
- **Weight Limits:** Ensure the vehicle is rated for the combined load and never exceed its maximum capacity.

## 3. Safe Driving Operations

Maintaining focus and adapting to conditions is critical during transport.

- **Distance Rules:** Maintain a "2-second gap" in normal conditions and a "4-second gap" in wet weather or when towing.
- **Eliminate Distractions:** Do not use mobile phones while driving. Preset GPS and radio stations before departing.
- **Defensive Techniques:** Anticipate hazards by looking well ahead and "leave yourself an out" by keeping extra space around the vehicle.
- **Fatigue Management:** Schedule breaks at least every two hours. If feeling sleepy, stop immediately for a nap of no more than 40 minutes.
- **Hazardous Goods:** If transporting dangerous goods, ensure the vehicle is correctly placarded and identifying documents are easily accessible in the cab.

#### 4. Shutdown and Post-Operation

Properly securing the vehicle after use prevents "roll-away" incidents.

- **Safe Stop Procedure:** Engage the handbrake, place the transmission in neutral (or "Park"), switch off the engine, and remove the key.
- **Post-Use Inspection:** Perform a final walk-around to check for any new damage or leaks.
- **Log Completion:** Record mileage, fuel levels, and any maintenance concerns in the vehicle logbook before returning the keys to a secure area.

#### 5. Emergency Response

- **Breakdowns:** Move to a safe location, turn on hazard lights, and set up warning triangles.
- **Accidents:** Stop immediately, check for injuries, secure the scene, and report to the supervisor and, if necessary, emergency services.