

Subject: December 2022 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches

## December 2022

Newsletter

12/1/22

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- **Next Webinar Dec 7, 2022, at 4:00PM has been cancelled.**

## 10 Essential Winter RV Travel Tips

by Rene Agredano - NOVEMBER 12, 2015

One of the greatest advantages to owning a home on wheels is that you have the option to drive away from Old Man Winter...usually. Unfortunately, as many RVers eventually discover, making a fast break from freezing temperatures isn't always possible.

If cross-country winter RV travel sends you into the polar vortex while in your RV, it pays to follow these 10 essential tips:

### **1. Service your furnace, LP gas, and water heater ahead of time.**

Annual maintenance is a must for any RV owner, especially if you use your rig year-round. Have a professional inspect, and if necessary, service the heating systems in your rig which are critical for winter comfort.

### **2. Know your RV's plumbing layout.**

Do you know where your RV plumbing is routed throughout your rig? Study the schematics of your RV to prepare for potential trouble spots where water can collect and freeze. Any exposed lines, elbow connectors, or drafty places can mean frozen

pipes in winter. You may want to add a remote temperature sensor to learn which parts of your RV are coldest and may need extra winter TLC.

### **3. Add a catalytic heater.**

Many RV furnaces don't do a good enough job keeping the RV warm. These inefficient machines consume lots of propane and require a open flame reaching temperatures in excess of 1200° F. On the other hand, a catalytic heater uses a flameless platinum-based chemical reaction to heat a space, which is much safer since the heating process only reaches 750° F for effective operation.

### **4. Insulate drafty spots.**

Inspect your rig to find out where cold air can find its way inside. From exterior cabinets to kitchen plumbing, RVs are notoriously drafty. Although you need a fresh air supply if you add a catalytic heater to your rig, all of the other spots that invite breezes inside should get padded with some type of foam or mylar insulation.

### **5. Travel with a hairdryer.**

Hairdryers aren't just for big hair. They come in handy for unexpectedly frozen water hoses, satellite dishes, and even if your jacks freeze to the asphalt.

### **6. Don't let your water hose freeze.**

If you're parked with full-hookups and a cold snap suddenly hits your area, a standard RV water hose will be one of the first things to freeze. Although it's a far better idea to disconnect your hose in the first place, if you don't want to you can purchase a galvanized steel RV water hose or some RV water line heat tape to keep fresh water flowing during mildly cold weather.

### **7. Choose sunny, wind-free parking spots.**

Should you have the opportunity to choose your own campsite either at a RV park or while boondocking in a parking lot, look for the sunniest spot you can find. If you can locate one with a wind break, you just scored! Also be mindful about which way the wind is blowing, however, and park your rig so that winds will hit the front or rear of the coach, not the sides.

### **8. Open interior cabinets and drawers to keep heat circulating around plumbing.**

Although your heater will work a little harder to fill more space in your rig, opening up cabinets and drawers will help get more heat to critical plumbing fixtures.

### **9. Keep your fresh water tank filled.**

If you're parked and you know it'll be too cold to connect to utilities, a full-fresh water tank will ensure you can run plumbing and enjoy some creature comforts in the morning.

## 10. Use the oven.

No, we don't mean use the oven to heat the rig, but rather use it to prepare hot meals. When you're done baking turn it off but leave the oven door open to add extra heat to your rig.

## Customer Article - Lee Orth

Last April I invested in an addition to my Equalizer hitch, an addition I had never heard of before. Why this addition? Well, like most Airstreamers, I spent some time perusing various aspects of the trailering world. Jane and I were not new to the camping world, but we might as well have been, since our last adventures, featuring differing trailers over the years ended decades ago. Fast-forward to the fall of 2019, when we bought a 2020 25' FBT Flying Cloud, after our daughter and son-in-law bought a 30' rear bedroom Flying Cloud a year and a half before. Somehow, the camping bug hit us again. After a brief fling with the Airstream Nest, we settled on our present trailer.

In the process of learning and relearning as much as I could about the trailer world and its systems, I came across several somewhat concerning, if not disturbing articles. Reports came in concerning dimpling of the aluminum just over the front A frame, popping rivets, and even the cracking of the A frame on two particular models of Airstreams: the front bedroom 25's, and the front bedroom 27's. In an effort to research this phenomenon, it appears several factors contribute to this malady.

To begin with, the front bedroom (FB) configuration ends up being very tongue heavy, in relation to the back bedroom setup. The published TW (tongue weight) of our particular trailer is 837 lbs. But in reality, it comes in at around 1100 lbs. Other similar trailers I have measured had yielded the same results. With the FB floor plan, there is a lot of storage available in the front half of the trailer, and not so much in the back. In addition, the underbelly tanks all go forward of the dual axles. The water tank begins at the axles, preceded by the black and the grey water tanks both in front of the axles. This of course will increase the TW, especially in relation to back bedroom trailers, like our kids' 30' FC, which has tanks at and then extending behind the axles toward the back, as well as a large storage area in the very back, underneath the huge double bed, where Greg, our SIL stores various items, including tools. (Most of my tools are stored in the front, behind the propane tanks. I have put some in the very back, under the dinette seat.) Take note that, in measuring our FB TW, the black and grey tanks were NOT full...in fact empty and 20%...which is to say that the TW was at a minimum; full would have added even more TW.

So why does this play into possible trailer damage, and what can be done about it? To begin with, we all no doubt realizes that the purpose of the WDH (weight distribution hitch) is to transfer some of the TW from the back axle of the TV (tow vehicle) to the front axle, resulting in a more balanced setup. Usually, the back axle ends up with 60% of the TW and the front 40%. In order to achieve this, the WD bars experience severe stress...this stress is transferred to the A frame of the trailer. The net effect of the WDH is to create a single platform; that is, when set up, the WDH plays out as a solid platform between the TV and the trailer frames. Incidentally, to exhibit this, years ago, one of the WDH companies ran an AD in a magazine showing an

Oldsmobile Toronado (which was one of the first full sized vehicles to have front wheel drive only) hitched to a trailer via a WDH with the back wheels removed. Obviously, they over torqued the WDH bars, but the phenomenon was, and is real.

Well, the net effect of this setup, which we all use, is to transfer any bump experienced by the TV to the trailer, and vice versa. So, when you hit a bump, each component, the TV and the trailer, each receive not just one, but two jolts. (When you hit a bump, the truck transmits it to the trailer, and when the trailer hits the bump, it re-transmits it to the truck.) Again, this is because you have one solid platform.

While this obvious phenomenon is known to us all, in some cases, it appears that a certain combination exacerbates the situation. In thinking this through, I believe a combination of a TV with a stiff suspension, combined with a stiff WDH, combined with a heavy TW is the perfect storm. Which it is in my case. I have a ¾ ton pickup with a High-Capacity Tow Package (I didn't order it this way, I just took what was available as I simply wanted a white truck with LED lights and this combination was found in Harrison, AR, then sent to Harrisonville, MO). Be it as it may, I have in essence, a heavy duty (unforgiving) suspension, mated to a very stiff (Equalizer) WDH, with a front heavy trailer. While the Equalizer WDH works well, the bars are so solid as to not provide any cushioning when one hits a bump. Contrast that to the Blue Ox WDH my SIL has for his 30' trailer, which bars noticeably bend upon hitching. It seems to me that bend also allows some cushioning. And he has a much better-balanced trailer with the back bedroom setup. So, my unqualified opinion is that a ½ ton mated to a hitch like a Blue Ox may be a more forgiving combination.

But back to my inherent problem. I came across a solution for my unfortunate malady. BTW, I did not experience a problem with my setup, I just wanted to avert one. It turns out there is a type of intermediary to a hitch designed to specifically address this problem. This has to do with an addition to a hitch that cushions the blow delivered by each bump with an air bag. I found two companies that address this issue: Shocker and Air Safe. Shocker appears to be cheaper, but I went with Air Safe ([www.airsafehitches.com](http://www.airsafehitches.com)), based on reviews, and interactions with other Airstreamers online via Airstream Addicts, who were navigating through this same issue.

The Air Safe hitch is mated to either a simple ball hitch or a WDH hitch (in my case). Now this combination is heavy together they weigh 100 lbs...add the bars, and it is a total of 127 lbs. In order to load it, I purchased lift table from Harbor Freight, for around \$200. With this table, I can easily, and precisely slide this WDH combo into my truck's receiver, and also unload it.

When you hit a bump, the Air Safe absorbs the blow (90% the manufacturer says) and does not pass it on to your trailer. Conversely, the trailer does not pass the bump back to your TV. The result is a smoother ride, a supposed savings in fuel, tire wear and a damage preventative to your trailer.

How effective is it? I'm not 100% sure. It seems to me that the trailer rides more smoothly...maybe it is psychological...I do know that it makes me feel better. Other people, who are no doubt more savvy than I am, have to a person claimed a marked improvement. One of these, Marvin Williams, who bought an Air Safe partly upon my recommendation, has noted improvement. His is mated to a Blue Ox WDH I believe.

BTW, even though my SIL's longer, better balanced 30' FC sports a Blue Ox WDH, he has experienced popped rivets in front that I never have.

Air Safe has been making models for 5<sup>th</sup> wheel, Goosenecks, and Receiver setups for decades. Also, they are popular for people towing horse trailers.

The reason I have a Class 7 is because my truck, with its heavy-duty tow package, comes with a 3" receiver. The sales distributor, Lloyd Stegemann (407-973-2980), out of Island Park, NY) recommended that so that there is no slop. I probably could have gotten by with a much smaller size, but I didn't want the slop. Evidently, my extra built-in capacity (1875 lbs TW) still works well with a smaller sized trailer as mine, as one blows up the rubber airbag to where the silver side bars are level. 40lbs in my case (which I have never had to adjust). Obviously, this allows a softer bounce; a heavier TW would require more air pressure, up to 100 lbs. Lloyd said this would work, and it does.

Prices vary among the various models, depending on each model's specifications. And of course, prices are in flux, given our inflationary economy. I suspect the extended shaft models allow one to drop the truck's tailgate without hitting the trailers jack. In my case, the addition of the Air Safe hitch mated to my Equalizer hitch extended the setup far back enough to where my tailgate easily clears. (It must be noted, that when one extends a hitch, it also tends to add to trailer sway; however front heavy trailers naturally exhibit much less sway, and besides, not hitting your tailgate is a real bonus). I gave \$2185 for my Class 7 hitch (including shipping). Not cheap, but when one considers the alternative...ie., popped rivets, dimpled aluminum, and even cracked A frames, then add in the often-frustrating warranty claims process, I felt the price was worth protecting our investment. I am a bit of a worrywart, and I know I sleep better now.

BTW.... Lloyd reminded me that the capacities of each of the Classes' hitches is decreased by 25% if you mate it to a WDH (which we all would). These capacities can be seen above in the extended shaft number...for example, with a WDH Class 5 has a TW capacity of 1050 lbs, Class 6, 1500 and Class 7, 1875lbs.

Most of you have towed your trailer for many more miles and for many more years than Jane and I have. And obviously, if you haven't encountered any problems, you are good to go. Yet, physics being what it is, those of us owning trailers in the purported vulnerable realm may benefit from this unique device. Happy towing to all!

Lee Orth – Air Stream Forum

## **How the right trailer can make towing not suck**

By Tim Suddard Sep 16, 2022

*[Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the December 2006 issue of Grassroots Motorsports.]*

Making the jump to towing to events is a major one. It adds another whole level of expense and complexity to this game that we play.

It's not so much the towing itself that is so bad, but the fact that you now need another vehicle that will tow this trailer. This adds two more pieces of equipment that will need regular maintenance to your life. Plus you now need to find a place to store all this junk.

Nevermind that trailers only get flat tires, lose their lights, or need new wheel bearings 10 minutes before it's time to leave for the national championships. That's Murphy's Law at work.

Over the many years I have been playing this game, I have had just about every type of trailer imaginable. From the spindly homemade ones to the fancy enclosed models, I have dragged them from our Florida home to all corners of the U.S. and beyond. I don't know much, but after towing trailers for thousands of miles, I have paid my dues.

I started out with what we unaffectionately called the Worst Trailer in the World. It was a happy day when we unloaded that homemade, unsprung, poorly designed piece of crap. I can't believe I towed my Datsun 240Z on that thing all the way to the Solo II Nationals in Salina, Kansas. Twice!

Yes, stay away from homemade trailers. Most feature fixed suspensions and are heavy and overbuilt. They might be fine for dragging construction equipment to local job sites, but I wouldn't want to take one on the highway ever again.

From there, I went through a succession of enclosed trailers. One of my smartest moves was going from a 24-foot enclosed unit down to a 16-footer. We learned (the hard way) that an old motorhome like the one we had can tow a 24-foot trailer, but the trailer's weight and drag will suck the life out of the engine. If you can get away with it, a smaller trailer is easier to manage on the highway, at the event site, and even in your backyard.

Enclosed trailers have a lot of advantages, but a few distinct disadvantages. On the plus side, they will protect your car from theft and weather both on the road and at the event. You can securely and safely carry tools and spares, too. You can even use an enclosed trailer as a garage when you get home. And from a sponsorship standpoint, there's nothing like an enclosed trailer for promoting a brand name. (Unfortunately, broadcasting to the entire world that there's a race car inside the trailer is also telling them that there's stuff worth stealing, too.)

On the downside, an enclosed trailer is more expensive than an open one. It will also need a much stronger tow vehicle, and can be cumbersome to move around once it's loaded.

The next trailer I owned wasn't very good, but I loved it. It was actually a 12x7-foot utility trailer designed to carry lawn equipment. It had a single axle and no brakes. These are inherently bad features, but I picked this thing up locally for \$700. (Although I bought the trailer brand-new, it came with used tires to keep the price down.)

I bought this small, simple trailer because I was racing a Formula Vee at the time. We made our own ramps for it, built a tire rack and mounted a spare tire. Until it got to be about 10 years old—and our Vee had been replaced by bigger and heavier cars—I saw this as a great trailer.

My staff, however, didn't like the way it flexed in the middle and swayed like crazy thanks to its single-axle design. The final straw was a particular trip involving our 2500-pound MINI Cooper S and two blow outs. So I sold it.

Here's the most beautiful thing about that trailer: After using it for 10 years, I sold it to a friend of a friend for more than what I paid for it. He was thrilled with it and still uses it today.

Today, we have arguably the best trailer in the world. We call it the Taj Mahal of open trailers.

About two years ago, I called Trailer World and asked them to build us a decent trailer. What they came up with is the slickest, fanciest all-aluminum open trailer I have ever seen. While only 15 feet long, this trailer has everything, from a tire rack to a winch. We have hooked it behind our motorhome, our Honda Ridgeline and our Nissan Pathfinder, and it tows like a dream every time.

Looking back on all this, I have some specific recommendations if you're shopping for a new trailer.

- First, get a decent one. Your enjoyment and your life may depend on it. A trailer purchase is not a good place to skimp. It is amazing how lovely a nice and light aluminum trailer tows. Everyone who has towed our new trailer makes a point of telling us how wonderful it is.
- Two, the extra-long aluminum ramps are a joy. The extra length means we never bottom out a low race car. When we're on the road, the ramps store nicely inside the trailer's base. Removable fenders also make loading and unloading a low car and servicing the trailer a breeze.
- Three, a winch is a blessing, especially if your race car has an on-off clutch or you like to drag junk cars out of the woods.
- Four, brakes are essential. We went with surge brakes, which are not highly recommended, but our only choice because we tow this trailer with a lot of different vehicles that are not always set up for electric brakes.
- Five, a dual-axle trailer makes all the difference. It is so much more stable on the road.
- Six, we love our tire rack, too. Splurge for one.

You don't need the fancy alloy wheels and all the doodads that drove the price of our trailer well north of \$5000, but if you do bite the bullet and get a really nice one, you will wonder why you dragged around junk for so many years.

Overall, towing sucks. But I can assure you that it sucks a lot less with the right equipment.

# Classic in the Front – Party in the Back



As a kid, I grew up taking family vacations in a trailer. The UK can be cold, wet and damp; nevertheless, I have fond memories of those carefree simple times.

Maybe that's what attracts people of all ages to the burgeoning vintage trailer scene.

Lately I've seen them all over the freeways, but only when I followed a nice 1963 Chevy truck loaded with two-wheelers towing an aluminum Airstream can to Bonelli Park in California did I discover just how big the scene really is. There were dozens of vintage trailers, and almost as many classic cars and trucks towing them.

I make the point because it means that, like racers, these enthusiastic families typically own a fleet of four, five or even more vehicles, making them excellent customers.

## **Add-On & Go**

The trailers themselves may not offer huge potential for the conventional aftermarket shop as we know it, but there are opportunities. For example, located in San Diego is Southern California Vintage Trailer (SCVT), a shop that can restore your trailer or find you a trailer to have restored. They say, by phone, Skype or in person, they'll guide you through the restoration process, from design and spec to build.

By their nature, trailers are compact, and, like tiny houses, they need careful planning to maximize the use of available space. I examined one trailer that had an open-plan toilet that might be a little too much for people who like their privacy. Hence the need for thoughtful preparation if a total makeover is planned.

SCVT quotes construction budgets from \$3,500 to \$6,000 per linear foot—yes, per foot—making the restoration of a 16-foot trailer around \$56,000 to \$96,000—not an unsubstantial amount.

I point this out because there might be businesses out there that have an under-utilized shop and/or staff and this could be profitable work, albeit somewhat specialized.

Besides full restoration shops that are located across the country in places as far and wide as Brainerd, Minnesota, Townsend, Montana and Panama City, Florida, there are also numerous companies that supply trailer components, from aluminum to awnings, solar systems tires and wheels, plus all the requisite furnishings, fixtures and fittings. I even found Vintage Trailer Gaskets in Walnut, California that specializes in, well, gaskets and associated products for doors and windows.

There's a boot camp for learning about restoration techniques operated by Caroline and Paul Lacitinola, who also publish *Vintage Camper Trailers* magazine.

Hand in hand with the trailers goes a requirement for vintage furniture and props to add to the nostalgia. Obviously, these aren't items necessarily distributed through the automotive aftermarket, but occasionally things such as vintage coolers, bicycles including electrics, signage and even furniture might pop up as part of your inventory or could be something easily acquired to make a customer happy. It's all about customer service.

## **AirSafeHitches.com**

### **Price Increase in 2023**

**After reviewing the last year of invoices from the companysuppliers, it is clear that our costs have gone up considerably and we need to try and recover some of those costs. As we order material for future orders our prices have gone up over 10% for the material cost and labor. We are looking between 5-10% price increase in Jan 2023. Nothing is formalized yet; I wouldn't expect the changes to take effect until January 1st.**

**We will maintain the current price on our hitches while our current inventory last or the price increase is announced. Let me know if there is anything I can do to assist you in purchasing the products before the prices increases.**

**Just wanted to give you a heads up.**

### **Why Use an Air Hitch?**

**AirSafe is committed to giving you the safest and most comfortable ride possible. We offer the largest selection of air hitches in the industry, including 5th wheel hitches, gooseneck hitches, and receiver hitches for trailer hitches for trucks.**

Our hitches utilize the most innovative engineering and design available on the market today. With a fully height adjustable design, AirSafe hitches are easy to use and don't cause any headaches.

Air Safe Hitches also delivers the ultimate in safety.

With only 10% trailer inertia, our hitches make your vehicles sway a lot less. By evenly distributing the weight between the trailer and the tow vehicle, you will have more ability to brake and steer safely.

AirSafe Hitches are the safest way to tow anything, and they provide the most comfort of any ride. If that isn't enough to convince you, these hitches are also affordable. With AirSafe Hitches, you get safety, comfort, and savings all in one.

**5th Wheel Hitches** - Omni-Directional 4 air bag vs competitor 2 air bag system. A four-air bag hitch is designed to allow the hitch head to move on the air bags in any direction based on articulation from the trailer itself. The result of such continuous motion results in a smooth ride and decrease chucking and surging forces from the trailer on the truck. In addition to the movement from the trailer, the 4-airbag hitch support 100% of the pin weight, increasing the effectiveness of the air springs. This results in a smooth and controlled motion for the trailer on the truck.

**Receiver Hitches**– If you want a smoother ride and the ultimate in control, then you need the advantage provided by Air Safe Hitches with the Receiver Hitch by AirSafe™. With an Air Safe Receiver Hitch you will get a 90% smoother ride than with a traditional hitch, which can save you money. Glide across the highways and roads avoiding the constant bouncing, which leads to a decrease in gas mileage and early wear and tear on your tires. Our Air Safe Receiver Hitches also reduce stress on your truck and trailer suspension and help eliminate breakages inside the trailer. Our design allows total air ride vs the Shocker Hitch with the hinged approach.

**Gooseneck Hitches** – Air Safe offers the industry's largest selection of air hitches. Innovation and engineering insures you receive the safest and smoothest ride. "Enjoy the ride, arrive alive." With AIRSAFE™ you stop the flow of shock flow between the tow vehicle to the trailer and greatly reduce the explosion of energy when these two forces meet. The patented AIRSAFE™ hitches are engineered so the connection to the trailer is separated from the connection to the tow vehicle by an industrial strength airbag. Air Safe Gooseneck Hitches by AIRSAFE™ are simply the best air product money can buy. They are engineered with you and your precious cargo in mind. Simply remove your existing gooseneck tube and coupler and replace it with the AIRSAFE™ system. Available in round and square necks.

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