



For Immediate Release

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Washington campaign reminds motorists that securing their load leads to safer travels for everyone

State agencies ramp up patrols and outreach to curb littering and improve safety

OLYMPIA, Wash. – A coalition of state agencies are coming together to launch a statewide campaign timed with [National Secure Your Load Day on June 6](#). The campaign raises public awareness about the need to properly secure cargo while honoring and remembering individuals whose lives have been lost or affected by objects falling from an unsecured vehicle load.

The coalition includes the Washington State Patrol (WSP), the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC), the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Washington Department of Ecology.

“We all have a responsibility to protect one another and to protect our environment by securing cargo to prevent dangerous debris from falling on our roads,” said Washington Gov. Jay Inslee. “Washingtonians care about our environment, and we care about our communities – let’s all do our part to reduce litter and keep our roads safe.”

It’s well established that unsecure loads and subsequent roadside debris is both an environmental issue and a significant safety hazard for travelers, roadside workers and all road users. Drivers in Washington state continue to endure crashes due to debris from unsecured loads, with 300 crashes on average each year. This statistic remains consistent year to year, and in 2023 these crashes led to 16 injuries and tragically one death.

Roadside litter is a costly and ongoing challenge for Washington. Collectively, Ecology and WSDOT invest approximately \$12 million annually in litter cleanup efforts on state roads and highways. The two agencies collected nearly 11.2 million pounds of roadway litter statewide in 2023, a 230% increase from the amount picked up in 2022.

“Nearly forty percent of the trash and litter on Washington’s roads starts out as loose cargo falling from a truck or a car,” said Laura Watson, director of the Washington Department of Ecology. “It’s dangerous to other drivers – and it harms our state’s environment. A few extra seconds strapping down your cargo can prevent a collision, and help keep Washington beautiful.”

Now in its fourth year, the [We Keep Washington Litter Free](#) campaign continues its mission to keep the state's roadways as safe and litter free as possible. As part of this effort, state troopers will carry out emphasis patrols across the state for three consecutive weekends June 3–23. During these patrols, troopers will actively monitor for compliance with [state laws](#) on securing loads, and taking the opportunity to educate and enforce when necessary.

Fines for failing to secure loads or littering range from \$50 to \$5,000, with the highest penalties applied to offenses involving "lit debris" such as cigarettes that could lead to brush fires and a greater number of hazards. Drivers whose unsecured loads cause physical harm or property damage could also face criminal prosecution and jail time.

WSP troopers and commercial vehicle enforcement officers contacted more than 5,000 motorists for improperly secured loads in 2023.

"The truth is collisions caused by unsecured loads are completely preventable," said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. "By choosing to secure all of the items in your vehicle before hitting the road, you can contribute to safer travels for everyone."

How can we prevent this? It all starts with simply strapping down and securing all items in your car, truck or trailer for every trip – even if it's just across town. Tarps, ratchet straps and cargo nets are easy and effective solutions for securing many types of vehicle loads and preventing road hazards.

As part of the campaign, Ecology is funding load securing equipment giveaways in Clark, Skagit and Snohomish counties in June. Additionally, up to 40 retail hardware stores statewide will share best practices and promote products to safely secure loads.

To learn more about this campaign and how you can help keep Washington roads safe and litter free, visit [SecureLoadsWA.org](#) or [SujetaTuCargaWA.org](#).

More information

- To learn more about this campaign, please visit [SecureLoadsWA.org](#) or [SujetaTuCargaWA.org](#).
- Call 911 if you see a dangerous unsecured load or something fall from a vehicle.
- [Learn more about Ecology's litter pick up and prevention programs](#) or visit WSDOT's [Adopt-a-Highway volunteer program webpage](#) to lend a hand cleaning up roadside litter.
- The national [Secure Your Load](#) safety campaign was started by northwest resident Robin Abel after her life was altered by an unsecured load that nearly killed her daughter.

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