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## Highway to Help: Secure Your Load Makes Roads Safer With The Steadfast Support of Its Partners in Safety

NY, NY, May 23, 2019 — The annual Secure Your Load Day on June 6th has been paved with success, thanks to the hard work of the states who support it. Secure Your Load was founded by Robin Abel, whose tireless effort to raise awareness of the dangers of unsecured loads and road debris has galvanized 48 states and even Canada to recognize the day and begin educating the public on the importance of load securement, with some even beginning to employ policy to actually make our highways safer. Each state observed the day in its own unique way and used multiple agencies to get the message out.

State patrol nationwide have especially embraced this safety campaign and this enforcement and education of the public — as have waste facilities. In Washington State, WSP, DOT and DOE did a one month emphasis patrol on load securement and its Criminal Justice Training Center started including Secure Your Load into their training curriculum. A Utah patrol officer recently said “one of my biggest fears is to die clearing debris on freeway.” You can see his story here:

<https://kutv.com/news/local/trooper-hit-on-i-15-one-of-my-biggest-fears-is-to-die-clearing-debris-on-freeway>

He’s right to be concerned: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) states that in 2016 there were 683 deaths, 19,663 injuries and 90,266 incidents related to unsecured loads. Between 2011 and 2014, more than 200,000 crashes, which resulted in 39,000 injuries and 500 deaths, were caused by road debris, according to a study by the AAA Foundation for Safety. As a nation, we spend up to \$11.5 billion on litter and it is estimated that 20 to 40% of that litter is from unsecured loads.

Abel, a Seattle, Washington resident, made it her mission to fight this senseless and avoidable danger after her daughter was catastrophically injured by an unsecured load. Channeling her grief into action, Abel started a Secure Your Load movement in 2004, in an effort to raise awareness and even change the laws. In the past 16 years, her steadfast work has created real change, like convincing President Obama and Congress to include load-securing recommendations to the states in the Fast Act of December 2015, receiving 27 Proclamations from states, cities and counties throughout the country.

"The states are enthusiastically embracing this safety message. These safety professionals and law enforcement have gone out of their way to participate in Secure Your Load Day on June 6 — and I am so grateful for their support," says Abel, who has single handedly led the charge to shift the traffic safety paradigm.

Abel adds, "We put on our seatbelts and fasten our children in car seats so why is it that we think it's OK to leave anything loose in the bed of our trucks and risk endangering others on the road? A 20-pound object at 55 MPH has a force of 1000 pounds at impact."

Other major victories include the The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) including the day on its calendar and the addition of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) approved Secure Your Load language in the model manual for all non-commercial drivers nationwide.

"Unsecured loads and road debris are not freak accidents but frequent incidents and most are preventable with just a few minutes of time and a few dollars in equipment," says Abel, who adds that, "weight is not a form of load securement and neither is the cram technique. All items need to be securely fastened to the vehicle."

The good news is that awareness continues to fuel policy. Last year, Alaska passed new load securement bill, becoming the latest state to do so. Unfortunately the common-sense law comes too late for Alaska resident Kelly Ann Roy, who was almost killed when someone lost their unsecured load in front of her car while she was driving to work.

"Having a traumatic brain injury has drastically changed my life. I fight every day to get better. That driver is responsible for what happened to me. His actions ripped away my ability to be a person — to walk, have a conversation, even to hold someone's hand or hug them. It's taken years to get back the simplest of things that are simple yet so important. The driver could have spent five minutes to make sure his load was secured but he didn't. He didn't even try and that five minutes not spent I have paid for with the rest of my life," Roy says.

Despite her injuries, Kelly desperately wanted to make the roads safer for others and reached out to Abel for help in her home state, where the Anchorage Waste Facility issued upwards of 1100 fines for unsecured loads in 2017 alone.

Even though Secure Your Load has seen many gains, there's still a lot more work to be done. Abel would like to see an increase in highway safety education, programs at waste facilities, an emphasis on patrols, DOT cameras, every states' driver guides updated with AAMVA model language.

On June 6th, in honor of those whose lives have been impacted or taken by unsecured loads and road debris and in an effort to make load-securing a standard practice, Abel urges everyone to share and heed this urgent traffic safety message. This simple precaution will save lives.

Here's how Abel recommends to properly secure your load in five easy steps:

1. Tie down load with rope, netting or straps
2. Tie large objects directly to the vehicle or trailer
3. Cover the entire load with a sturdy tarp or netting
4. Don't overload the vehicle
5. Always double check load to make sure a load is secure

"Secure Your Load as if everyone you love is driving in the car behind you," Abel adds.

For more information, go to [www.secureyourload.com](http://www.secureyourload.com) or go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iT7-ES5OQM&feature=youtu.be> to see their recent PSA.