



CI-115A

Vehicle Safety and Standards Branch

Circular to Industry

Wheelchair Carriers Fitted to Towbars

The following policy has been adopted for the use of wheelchair carriers on vehicles where the weight of the wheelchair and carrier is fully supported by the vehicle and/or towbar.

The carriers may be a type manufactured commercially in relatively large quantities or a type manufactured as a 'one-off' or in small volumes.

1. A distributor/seller of any wheelchair carrier must obtain acceptance of the unit from the Department of Transport (the Department) for each model series of automobile to be used with the carrier.
2. The Department may request a professional engineer's report for any carrier/vehicle combination, with specific reference to paragraph (10) and the design requirements of this policy document, where any doubt exists regarding the suitability of the carrier/vehicle combination in satisfying these requirements.
3. The carrier must be painted a bright colour or fitted with a suitable retro-reflective material facing to the rear to ensure that it is conspicuous to vehicles following.
4. Consideration should be given to providing a flexible flagpole and flag which can be mounted on the carrier to improve its visibility when the car is parked with the wheelchair removed.
5. A metal plate must be affixed to the carrier in a prominent position showing the manufacturer's and/or distributor's company name, along with their address or contact number, and the following information stamped alongside each of the headings:

MAXIMUM CARRIER LOAD (kg)
MINIMUM MASS OF VEHICLE (kg)
MAXIMUM OVERHANG (percentage of the wheelbase)

6. Protruding edges and corners of the carrier must be rounded so they do not constitute a safety hazard. This also applies to folding carriers raised to the vertical position.
7. The empty or loaded carrier must not obscure any of the vehicles compulsory lighting or reduce the angle of coverage of any vehicle lights below the minimum acceptable angle, otherwise additional approved lighting must be provided. A lighting board is acceptable providing it meets all appropriate regulations.

8. The empty or loaded carrier must not obscure the vehicle number plate or the compulsory number plate lights, including when the carrier is in the raised position. If it does then the number plate must be mounted on a lighting board similar to that used on a boat trailer, or an equivalent device, using an approved holder fitted with rear number plate lights.
9. The carrier/wheelchair load must not adversely affect vehicle handling in regard to steering and braking. The weight of the carrier and wheelchair must not cause the vehicle to lift at the front to the extent that it causes light steering, poor stability or incorrect headlight alignment. If these symptoms are apparent, they may be overcome by fitting supplementary rear “helper” springs or by choosing a vehicle of longer wheelbase.
10. The carrier and wheelchair load must not overload the rear axle and tyres of the carrying vehicle or any other component of the vehicle including the towbar or the towbar’s system of attachment to the vehicle. Allowance must be made for the extra load applied to these components by the dynamic effects of the vehicle travelling at normal speeds.
11. For a carrier with a lifting system, the carrier table must be fitted with a locking pin, latch, safety chain or similar device. This is to ensure it remains safely in the raised position whilst the carrying vehicle is travelling on the open road. It must be able to support the wheelchair and carrier if and when the lifting mechanism fails.
12. If the carrier is designed to fold up when not in use, ensure that the carrier platform can be securely latched in the vertical position when the vehicle is travelling without the wheelchair. Non-folding carriers that are not in use must be removed when the vehicle is not being used when wheelchairs are not intended to be carried that day.
13. The carrier must be equipped with adequate means for securing the wheelchair in accordance with the “Load Restraint Guide” published jointly by the National Transport Commission and the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.
14. The carrier overhang from the vehicle rear axle must not exceed 60% of the vehicle wheelbase, unless specifically approved by the Department in writing.
15. A distributor/seller of any wheelchair carrier unit is responsible to inform the purchaser of any special conditions of use of the carrier; in particular the specific requirements of paragraphs 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14.
16. The following notes should be included in a carrier operating/maintenance manual:

- For those carriers equipped with a flagpole and flag, the flagpole and flag is to be mounted on the carrier when the car is parked with the wheelchair removed.
- Exercise caution when driving a vehicle fitted with a wheelchair and carrier. Bouncing may occur and vehicle's instability may increase.
- Fold-up carriers must be securely latched in the vertical position when not in use, and non-folding carriers must be removed when no wheelchair will be carried that day.
- The carrier table supporting the wheelchair must be safely locked and secured when the table is raised. The wheelchair must always be properly restrained to the carrier table when the vehicle is driven.

Related documents and links

- Load restraint guide is available on the National Transport Commission's website (www.ntc.gov.au)

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