

Your Watershed

By the Russian River Watershed Association

Properly Secure Your Loads

Sonoma County residents share a responsibility to keep Sonoma County local roads and highways safe and clean. You can help reduce roadside litter and prevent accidents from happening by using tarps, nets and tie-downs to secure your loads.

One of the primary sources of litter on roadways is from trucks and other vehicles with uncovered or unsecured loads. We have all seen debris falling or blowing out of a vehicle. Improperly secured loads can be a danger to others and yourself. Unsecured loads are responsible for about 25,000 accidents each year in North America, resulting in approximately 80-90 fatalities (Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety).

Debris from unsecured loads can also pose a threat to the environment by falling into storm drains and ending up in local waterways. You might be unintentionally contributing to roadside litter by not properly securing items in your vehicle or truck bed. Even if you are going a short distance or not driving on the highway, it is still important to secure your load.

According to the California Vehicle Code, it is against the law to operate a vehicle on the highway which is improperly covered, constructed, or loaded so that any part of its contents or load spills, drops, leaks, blows, sifts, or in any other way escapes from the vehicle. Any vehicle transporting garbage, trash, rubbish, ashes, etc., must have the load covered to prevent any part of the load from spilling on the highway. Failure to secure a load can result in fines starting at \$109.00 and can go up into the thousands if materials other than loose hay and straw, clear water, or feathers from live birds should escape. (Source: California Vehicle Code Sections 23114 & 23115, Uniform Bail and Penalty Schedule).

There are many ways to make sure your load is properly secured. Tarpaulins, or tarps, are frequently used to cover and secure loads on trucks. To prevent your load from shifting and falling out, be sure and tie down your load with rope, bungee cords, netting or straps. Larger items should be tied directly to your vehicle. Put lighter weight items at the bottom of the load and don't overload your vehicle. Double check your load cover in the mirror while driving to make sure it does not tear loose. Spending a few extra minutes to make sure your load is secured can prevent fall-outs causing accidents and litter on the roadways.

The County of Sonoma operates four transfer stations and the Central Disposal Site. When visiting these disposal sites, please ensure that your loads are both covered and secured. Trash or recyclables can be placed in sturdy bags and covered with a tarp or netting. Residents who purchase compost from the Central Disposal Site are encouraged

to bring tarpaulins with them, to ensure the load is covered before leaving the site. Information about the hours and programs available at the Central Disposal Site and transfer stations can be found in the Sonoma County Recycling Guide located within the AT&T Yellow Pages under “R” for recycling or on the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency website www.recyclenow.org.

To learn more about what you can do locally to prevent litter on Sonoma County roadways visit www.KeepSonomaClean.org.

Please take the time to secure your load!

This article was authored by Lisa Steinman from the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rrwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.