



Canadian Trailer Construction Requirements

The following information has been created to assist trailer manufacturers (and importers) understand Canadian trailer construction and design requirements. This fact sheet is a guidance document; manufacturers need to contact the respective government department for complete requirements. If you have any questions, please contact Transport Canada:

*Information Centre, Motor Vehicle Safety
Transport Canada / Government of Canada
MVS-SA@tc.gc.ca
Tel: 1-800-333-0371 / TTY: 1-888-675-6863*

Federal Construction Standard

Trailer construction standards are governed by the Motor Vehicle Safety Act called: "An Act to regulate the manufacture and importation of motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment to reduce the risk of death, injury and damage to property and the environment".

The Act empowers Transport Canada to issue Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) which regulate the safety and emission performance of new vehicles and includes trailers. Other regulations address proof of compliance and retention of records, and the requirement for companies to issue Notices of Defect according to procedures established by the department. The Act applies to manufacturers engaged in interprovincial trade and importers of vehicles or components into Canada.

The Act also has slightly different requirements for Canadian manufacturers compared to the foreign manufacturers or importers.

Below are some of the requirements for construction:

- 1) **[Motor Vehicle Safety Act \(Canada\) and Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations \(Canada\):](https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/acts-regulations/acts-1993c16.htm)**

<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/acts-regulations/acts-1993c16.htm>

- 2) **[Trailer Information Guide \(Same as requirements for construction link\):](https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/tp-tp13136-menu-174.htm)**

<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/tp-tp13136-menu-174.htm>

- 3) **[Trailers: Federal Lighting Equipment Location Requirements https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/tp-tp13136-trailer_e-414.htm](https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/tp-tp13136-trailer_e-414.htm)**

Below is information that is specific to each province:

Alberta

- If you have a ball-and-socket hitch, you will also need safety chains as a secondary means of attachment. Chains should be crossed under the tongue of the trailer and correctly fastened. This applies to all trailers except fifth-wheel trailers
- two separate means of attachment (e.g., tow bar and safety chains) are required so that the failure of one attachment does not permit the trailer to separate from the towing unit
- Two tail and two brake lights, a license plate light, right and left turn signals, clearance lights and side markers are required
- Two side-view mirrors are required on a towing vehicle where the rear view is obstructed by the trailer

For more information please visit:

-information on lights, mirrors and hitch - <http://www.westerndirect.ca/learning-centre/insurance-news-and-advice/view/99understanding-laws-for-trailers>

-you can also visit: <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/2182.htm>

British Columbia

1)Towing A Recreational Trailer: What you need to know – Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC)

<http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/Documents/towing-trailer-full-mv2024.pdf>

2) Recreational Vehicle Towing In British Columbia - Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement Branch

http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/cvse/vehicle_inspections/PDF/MV3230.pdf

- Fact sheet from 2007, however, it is the most updated pdf that I can find
- All vehicles being towed via a ball hitch must have safety chain(s) or cable(s) and hitch secured to frame
- Two side-view mirrors are required on a towing vehicle where the rear view is obstructed by the trailer
- Taillights, brake lights, turn signals, a license plate light and reflectors are mandatory. Clearance lights and reflectors are required if the trailer's overall width is 2.05 metres or more or gross weight exceeds 1,400 kilograms

-information on lights, mirrors and hitch: <http://www.westerndirect.ca/learning-centre/insurance-news-and-advice/view/99understanding-laws-for-trailers>

Manitoba

- Requirements: attached by safety chains or cables, loose enough to allow you to turn right and left

-To review information on lights, mirrors and hitch taken click here: <http://www.westerndirect.ca/learning-centre/insuranceneews-and-advice/view/99-understanding-laws-for-trailers>

For more information please visit: <https://www.mpi.mb.ca/en/PDFs/TrailerSafety.pdf>

New Brunswick

For more information please

visit: http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pssp/pdf/drivers_vehicles/driverhandbook/DH_part3_e.pdf

-Trailers and other objects or devices drawn by a motor vehicle on a highway must have a secondary means of attachment to the towing vehicle in the form of a "safety chain". The safety chain should not be attached to the hitch but to the frame/bumper portion of the vehicle.

Newfoundland

A person shall not drive or operate on a highway a motor vehicle drawing a trailer unless:

- (a) the draw-bar or other connection between the motor vehicle and trailer will hold the vehicles together;
- (b) the device which couples the trailer to the motor vehicle is firmly attached to a structurally adequate integral part of the frame of each vehicle, or, where the towed vehicle is of a gross vehicle mass of less than 900 kilograms to a structurally adequate part of the towing vehicle and to an integral part of the frame of the towed vehicle;
- (c) the vehicles are equipped and connected with an auxiliary coupling device consisting of a chain or metal cable equal in strength to the principal coupling device, except that this provision shall not apply where the coupling device is a fifth wheel and kingpin assembly used to couple a semi-trailer to a truck tractor and that assembly shall be securely attached to the towing vehicle and shall not be operated with less bolts than was provided by the manufacturer or with any cracks or breaks in the securing attachments; and
- (d) in the case of a towing motor vehicle equipped with a fifth wheel assembly, the jaw closure mechanism and locking components function properly and the frame assembly is fitted with slide rails mounted to ensure the proper level of direction of the trailer kingpin to support a secure engagement.

For more information please visit: <http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/regulations/rc961007.htm>

Northwest Territories

- The towing vehicle must be equipped with a coupling device: a fifth wheel hitch, pintle hook, drawbar hitch, ball hitch or other approved coupling device designed to support the trailer. A coupling device that is not a fifth wheel hitch must be equipped with an alternate coupling device designed to support the same weight. Coupling devices must be in good working order and securely mounted to the frame of the vehicle.

-Two side-view mirrors are required on a towing vehicle where the rear view is obstructed by the trailer. NWT law adds that the mirrors must enable the operator to have a clear view of at least 60 metres behind the vehicle.

-Trailers must be equipped with a minimum of one red taillight and one red stop light at the rear of the vehicle

-for more information please visit: <http://www.westerndirect.ca/learning-centre/insurance-news-and-advice/view/99understanding-laws-for-trailers>

Nova Scotia

-different regulations regarding safety chains depending on whether there is a hinged or non-hinged tow bar

5 (1) A trailer shall be coupled to the towing vehicle with a safety connecting device that will prevent the trailer from breaking loose in the event the tow bar fails or becomes disconnected.

(2) The safety connecting device referred to in subsection (1) shall

(a) not be attached to any part of a trailer hitch that would render the safety connecting device ineffective should the trailer hitch or its attachment to the towing vehicle fail;

(b) have the minimum slack necessary for adequate articulation;

(c) have an ultimate strength not less than the gross weight of the trailer or trailers being towed and where the safety connecting device consists of two chains, two cables or two other links, each chain, cable or other link and its attachments shall have an ultimate strength equal to the gross weight of the trailer or trailers being towed;

(d) be connected in such a manner so as to prevent the tow bar from dropping to the ground, and to keep the swing of the trailer within safe limits in the event the tow bar fails or becomes disconnected;

(e) be equipped with a hook or hooks or other means of attachment that will not become disconnected accidentally;

(f) where it is used in conjunction with a hinged tow bar and where the safety connecting device consists of two **chains**, two cables or two other links, they shall be attached at two points as far apart as the configuration of the axle or frame permits and equidistant from the centerline of the combination of vehicles;

(g) where it is used in conjunction with a hinged tow bar and where the safety connecting device consists of a single chain or single cable,

(i) have its ends attached to the centerline of the combination of vehicles,

(ii) lead along the tow bar;

(h) where it is used in conjunction with a non-hinged tow bar,

(i) consist of two **chains**, two cables or two other links attached to the tow bar at a single point on the centerline of the tow bar or at two points equidistant from the centerline of the tow bar such that the attachment is behind the eye of the tow bar, or

(ii) consist of a single chain, cable or other link attached to the tow bar on the centerline of the tow bar at any point behind the eye of the tow bar;

(i) where it consists of two **chains**, two cables or two other links attached at separate points, the separate points shall be equidistant from the centerline of the combination of vehicles;

(j) where it consists of two **chains**, two cables or two other links attached to the same point or where a bridle, single chain, single cable or other single link is used, be attached to a point on the centerline of the combination of vehicles.

For more information please visit: <https://www.novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/mv8673.htm> (This consolidation is unofficial and is for reference only. For the official version of the regulations, consult the original documents on file with the [Registry of Regulations](#), or refer to the [Royal Gazette Part II](#).)

Nunavut

For information please visit: http://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/Professional_Drivers_Handbook.pdf

Ontario

Specifications and Standards for Trailer Couplings - <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900618>

Ministry of Transportation: "Your trailer must have two separate ways of attaching your vehicle so that if one fails or comes loose, the trailer will stay attached." **"If safety chains are used, they must be crossed under the tongue to prevent the tongue from dropping to the road if the primary hitch accidentally disconnects.** The chain hooks must have latches or devices that will not accidentally become detached" - <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/handbook/section5.4.6.shtml>

Prince Edward Island

For more information please visit: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/highwaysafety/index.php3?number=45873&lang=E>

Requirements:

Registration: Required, fee dependent on size of trailer

Lighting: Tail lights, brake lights, licence plate lights, clearance and side lamp markers, turn signals, reflectors, mud guards, fenders (dependent on design) required

Hitch: Ball hitch mounted on bumper, permitted; two safety chains required

Mirrors: Left & right rearview mirrors required

Brakes: Independent braking system, where gross vehicle weight exceeds 1,500 kg

Size Limits: Total length: 23m

Quebec

If you build a trailer, read the document entitled [Guide de construction de remorques de fabrication artisanale](#) (French Only) to help you choose a proper safety device for the your trailer's GVWR

"Whenever you pull a trailer that is not equipped with an independent braking system that can stop it should it become detached from the vehicle, you must use a safety device (chain or cable) to attach the trailer to the towing vehicle." "The device must be directly installed on the towing vehicle. This device must be solid enough to ensure that the trailer stays attached to the towing vehicle in the event that the coupling device breaks." - <https://saaq.gouv.qc.ca/en/road-safety/modesttransportation/automobile/moving-trailers-and-loads/trailer/>

Saskatchewan

National safety code: <https://www.sgi.sk.ca/businesses/commercialcarriers/safetycodes/>

-Hitch must be connected by a safe clevis or catch. A ball hitch mounted on the bumper is permitted up to a weight of 1,400 kilograms, but a safety chain is required. The hitch must be rated for the combined weight of the trailer and contents, and two safety chains must cross under the hitch.

- Left and right outside mirrors set to the widest point of the towed vehicle are required; the driver must have a clear view to the rear of the trailer

-Brake, tail and signal lights are required

-The Vehicle Equipment Regulations, 1987: <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Regulations/Regulations/V2-1R10.pdf>

-information on lights, mirrors and hitch taken obtained from this link: <http://www.westerndirect.ca/learningcentre/insurance-news-and-advice/view/99-understanding-laws-for-trailers>

Yukon

-Ensure that the tow vehicle, trailer and its load meet all legal and safety requirements set forth in the Motor Vehicles Act 1978.

All trailers should be inspected by a qualified mechanic on a pre-determined schedule to ensure roadworthiness.

-Properly attach safety chains in a crisscross or basket configuration prior to departure:

<http://www.healthandsafety.gov.yk.ca/our-health-safety-system/safe-work-practices-and-safe-job-procedures/towing-andtrailerling>