

I received an email from an RVer questioning the need for a supplemental brake system on the vehicle they tow behind their RV. I responded to the email by stating that in most cases it's the law that requires brakes on the towed vehicle or trailer, but the most important reason is for your safety and the safety of others.

Most U.S. States and Canadian Provinces have their own laws on the requirement for brakes on a towed trailer. The word **trailer** also applies to a **vehicle** being towed behind a motor home. These laws are normally based on the amount of weight being towed. One problem with this is that it might be legal to tow a 2,000 pound trailer with no brakes in the state where you live, but as soon as you cross the state line of a bordering state it is illegal to tow the same trailer without brakes. Add to this your insurance company may not cover you in the event of an accident involving a trailer with no braking system. Again, the most important reason is for your safety and the safety of others. For a complete list of braking laws for the U.S. and Canada go to <http://www.roadmasterinc.com/laws.htm>

The brakes on a tow vehicle or motor home are designed by the vehicle manufacturer to stop the weight of that particular vehicle, not the additional weight being towed behind it. This additional weight adds a substantial increase to the distance required to stop safely.

Travel trailers and 5<sup>th</sup> wheels come equipped with electric brakes and RV dealers educate the RV consumer on the requirements for adding an electronic brake control to the tow vehicle. Some Pop-ups are ordered with brakes and some without. Again, this is often times based on the braking laws for the state you live in. Keep in mind that once you cross a state line it could become illegal. My advice is if you're going to purchase a pop-up get one that has brakes.

The real culprit for disregarding braking laws is a motor home towing a vehicle behind it. Most people assume that because of the size of the motor home there is no need for a supplemental brake system on the towed vehicle and many RV dealers fail to communicate the requirement for a supplemental braking system.

*Tests performed on a flat stretch of dry pavement have shown that an unhitched motor home traveling at a speed of 50 mph needed an average of 132 feet of braking distance to reach a complete stop. Under the same speed and surface conditions, but with the added weight of a small car in tow, the stopping distance of the motor home expands to an average of 209 feet. A significant distance! In an identical test performed using the Roadmaster BrakeMaster™, the coach and towed car averaged a stopping distance of 137 feet. That's a mere 5 feet more than the unhitched stopping average.*

I for one was guilty of towing a vehicle without a braking system for quite some time. A close call, while driving through a major city during rush hour, suddenly educated me on how important it is. Another thing that surprises people is how much the vehicle they're towing actually weighs. Take your towed vehicle to a set of scales and have it weighed.

Make sure it has everything in it that will be in it when you are towing it. After you weigh it double check to make sure the receiver on the motor home is rated to tow that amount of weight and that you aren't exceeding any of the motor home weight ratings like the Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR). The GCWR is the maximum permissible weight of the fully loaded motor home and the fully loaded towed vehicle **combined**. Most RV chassis manufacturers base their GCWR on the assumption that a supplemental brake system is being used.

There are many different types of supplemental braking systems available on the market today. These types include surge, hydraulic, air and vacuum. Some are simple and some are more complex. After researching all of my options I chose the BrakePro™ by Roadmaster Inc. I decided on the BrakePro™ for several reasons.

- 1) It's portable and will work on any towed vehicle.
- 2) It doesn't require any modifications to the existing brake system.
- 3) It brakes your towed car proportionally and simultaneously to the motor home braking.
- 4) It's is easy to install and use.

The BrakePro™ is an inertia-activated, truly proportional braking system. A "smart chip" senses your motor home's rate of deceleration and signals a magnetic valve to release a proportionate amount of air; resulting in your towed car braking in proportion to your motor home. In other words, the harder you brake, the harder it will brake. Regardless of the brake system that best suits your individual needs the important thing is that you have one. There are many reasons to have a braking system on your towed vehicle.

- 1) It's the law
- 2) It can void your vehicle warranty
- 3) It can void your insurance
- 4) It will reduce wear and tear on RV brakes and other components
- 5) Liability

But, most importantly it SAFELY reduces the stopping distance and helps to protect you, your loved ones and the safety of others.

*Happy Camping,  
Mark*

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