

Liability

Transporting Wheelchairs Safely

Report Number: [LB-92-55](#)

Release Date: [October 29, 2010](#)

Section Title: [Consultations](#)

Question

Is there a liability hazard from improperly storing wheelchairs during transport or improperly securing the chair? If so, could E&S provide training materials or information on transporting disabled people in wheelchairs using customized vans or small buses?

Response

The liability associated with proper wheelchair securement and preventing wheelchair lift malfunctions are significant liability exposures. National and international efforts were initiated in the mid-1980s to develop voluntary equipment standards for the transportation safety problems associated with wheelchairs. The initial efforts targeted wheelchair tiedown and occupant restraint systems (WTORS) that will offer a comparable level of occupant restraint and crash protection to that available to occupants who use the manufacturer-installed and federally-regulated belt restraint systems. The following standard can be obtained outlining wheelchair tiedown and occupant restraint guidelines: The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) *Recommended Practice J2249, Wheelchair Tiedown and Occupant Restraint Systems for Use in Motor Vehicles*.

The most thorough resource available regarding wheelchair transportation safety is made possible from a grant provided by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research at: http://www.ercwts.org/RERC_WTS2_KT/RERC_WTS2_KT_home.html. The site offers:

- A video of wheelchair crash tests:
http://www.ercwts.org/RERC_WTS2_KT/RERC_WTS2_KT_Edu/RERC_WTS2_crashtest.html.
- A website devoted to transportation safety for wheelchair occupants:
http://www.ercwts.org/RERC_WTS2_KT/RERC_WTS2_KT_Edu/Lectures/RERC_03/TransSafety1.html.
- Links to Information for teaching others:
http://www.ercwts.org/RERC_WTS2_KT/RERC_WTS2_KT_Edu/RERC_WTS2_toolbox.html.

Wheelchairs being transported should be securely stored to avoid injuries to the driver or passengers.

Additional Training Materials

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers a training program for school bus drivers transporting children with special needs. The *Transporting Children with Special Needs Module* is a five-hour training program. It contains a section devoted to loading and unloading wheelchairs at: http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/Brady%20Web/topic_9/page5.html.
- SureLok Systems, a maker of restraint and floor anchor systems for wheelchairs, offers a training program for bus or transit drivers in the use of securing wheelchairs using SureLok brand products. A

Transporting Wheelchairs Safely

program worksheet describes the types of material covered in the program. The program is available at:
<http://www.sure-lok.com/training.html>.

- Americans with Disabilities (ADA) has a section on their website devoted to transportation at:
<http://www.disability.gov/transportation>.

COPYRIGHT ©2010, ISO Services, Inc.

The information contained in this publication was obtained from sources believed to be reliable. ISO Services, Inc., its companies and employees make no guarantee of results and assume no liability in connection with either the information herein contained or the safety suggestions herein made. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that every acceptable safety procedure is contained herein or that abnormal or unusual circumstances may not warrant or require further or additional procedure.