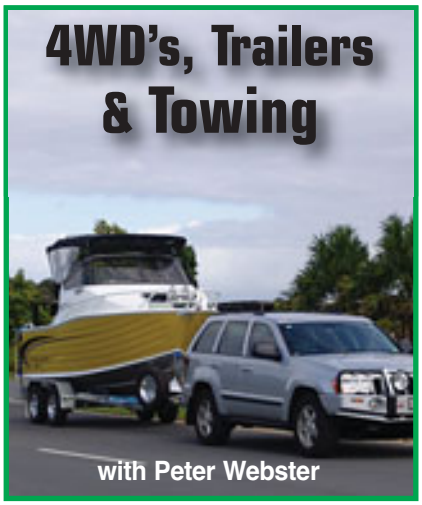
Why Tie-downs Are So Important



Since trailerboating began, back in the 1950's, there have been nearly as many methods of tying a boat down to its trailer securely, as there have been trailerboats.

In the beginning, everybody quickly learned how to tie a "Trucker's Hitch" properly, and for many years, boats were faithfully secured to their trailer with the ubiquitous hitch.

There is nothing wrong with that to this very day, but as boats became more sophisticated or, to put it another way, the paint jobs became more expensive, boatowners started looking for different ways of securing the rig beyond rope tiedowns with bits of rag or industrial carpet tucked underneath it where the rope crossed the boat.

In the 1970s, when multi-roller trailers were first invented, we even went through a period when many boatowners decided tie-downs were no longer necessary, given their boats were cradled by up to 64 multi-rollers on the mini-arms of the trailer.

To an extent, this was a valid comment, insofar as lateral (side to side) movement was concerned, because there is very little of that in a properly set-up deep vee boat on a multi-roller trailer. But that is to almost entirely miss one of the most important points of why boats need to be tied down very firmly on their trailer if they are going to survive long distances out on the highway.

Unfortunately, for many boatowners in the 70's, this became painfully obvious, as boatowners with pressed aluminium craft found to their horror that the bottoms of their tinnies had the appearance of aluminium left out in a severe hail storm, as the multi-rollers dimpled the pressed aluminium, and quite severely in some cases.

That was not a good idea, and after a spectacular season of dimpling (1976-1977) the idea of not tying down a boat to the trailer was quickly expunged. It wasn't just pressed tinnies being dimpled either, as the early multi-roller trailers had the unfortunate habit of losing the roller itself off the end of the galvanised steel arm, leaving the raw steel to rub up against the hull (ouch!) over the length of the trip on the highway.

The writer remembers very well looking at a Nova 21 that had travelled from Wollongong to Bermagui at that time, where two steel arms of the multi-roller system lost the rollers, and had worn their way right through the fibreglass, creating two significant holes in the bottom of the fibreglass Nova. The owner was not a happy chappy, especially as the trailer was virtually brand new.

Given that the writer was largely responsible for introducing these new fangled, funny looking multi-roller trailers back in the 1970's, we almost had to go into hiding when the Nova 21 owner realised we were in the same caravan park!

The problem of course was two-fold. The early multi-rollers used a silly, pathetically weak split pin and washer system to secure the rollers on the steel arms, and for some weird reason, owners like this fellow thought there was no longer a need to tie the boat down on the rollers, so the Nova 21 happily bounced its way from Wollongong to Bermagui. Worse, in those days, the word "bounced" had significant meaning, as the highways back then were pretty dreadful. Especially the run from Ulladulla into Bateman's Bay.

But technology evolved, and by the late 70's Australian derivatives of the American multi-roller system had emerged.

Queensland's Tinka Trailers especially took a leadership position at this time and really good multi-roller trailers started to appear - complete with tie-downs.

Straps Instead Of Rope

From memory, I think it was about the early 1980's that we started using the first of the ratchet and strap tie-down systems used by the trucking industry, and these of course made a considerable difference to the effectiveness of tie-downs – especially as the strap was far less

The bigger the rig - the bigger the tiedowns and attendant straps. It was amazing to see how much (and how quickly) *"Far-Away"* could work through a really heavy duty 75mm wide strap on the highway. The amount of twisting (or wracking) we experienced on this 8.2m ally trailer and 4.5 tonne (maximum) load, convinced the writer that if we did something this big again, we'd definitely invest in a fifth wheeler.