

Corrective Driving Techniques

When stability is in question under exceptionally bad driving conditions, despite good trailer balance and proper equipment, the driver must compensate. In any marginal driving situation, reduce speed, which will slow the reaction of your vehicles to external forces, while also giving you more time to react.

If sway occurs, the single most valuable technique for counteracting it is independent actuation of trailer brakes, even though it requires removing one hand from the steering wheel for a moment.

The location of the brake controller is a critical safety consideration. If it is positioned far under the dash and is hard to reach, relocate it to a better position accessible to the hand you can most comfortably remove from the steering wheel, typically the left hand.

With a properly balanced rig, you probably won't need to use the manual brakecontrol lever. But being capable of using it as a natural defensive maneuver is your insurance policy against loss of control in an emergency situation.

If severe sway occurs, don't step on the tow vehicle's brake pedal unless you're in danger of hitting something. Just lift your foot from the accelerator pedal, and apply trailer brakes sharply via the hand control. During adverse driving conditions, such as severe crosswinds, reduce speed and anticipate terrain that can produce sharp windblasts. Be prepared to use trailer brakes if necessary.

The driver who is vigilant about monitoring driving conditions and the scene in his rearview mirror typically will have better capability to use defensive techniques than the driver who is caught napping by a sudden change in driving conditions.

By following the recommendations outlined here, tow vehicle and trailer road manners can be greatly improved, providing safe, enjoyable travel.