

Breakaway

A pair of emails from the *Vintage Airstream Club* President, Rick Davis, WBCCI #1602 prompts the discourse this month. He wants to share some well thought out ideas on the desired length of a trailer breakaway cable.

Hi Fred,

Fully realizing that most safety tips enter into a gray area where there is not just one right way, I feel I must question the frequently seen advice that the breakaway cable should be shorter than the safety chains.

I fully agree that the safety chains should be crossed and if there is a failure the trailer tongue will drop on the crossed chains and be safely kept off the ground. If at this point the safety chains are shorter than the breakaway cable, you will feel something is amiss and be able to safely bring the unit to a stop because it is still behind you. This is my preferred method!

On the other hand, picture the same scenario, with the breakaway pulling because the breakaway cable is shorter than the safety chains. A full 12 volts would energize the trailer brake magnets, locking up two, four, or six wheels. The strength of the brakes would be pulling the trailer backwards, stretching the safety chains. More often than not the chains are secured with light duty hooks, instead of quick links that are more likely to hold. Trailer separation is not a pleasant picture!

I have spent much time thinking about this oft repeated advice (breakaway cable should be shorter) but cannot subscribe to it in any scenario I can come up with. I personally do not want the brakes fully activated until the trailer has detached from the vehicle. Of course the breakaway should be attached to some point other than on any of the hitch components

All that being said, I can make no claim to experience in this area never having lost a trailer. I work as a transport driver, delivering new trailers and 5th wheels all over the country so I do claim a bit of towing experience.

The other item, which I have also seen in your column, is the advice to stay in the curb lane on multi-lane highways. I can make a very sound case for not always doing that. (See below)

As I said earlier, some of these ideas are probably areas where there is no totally right or wrong procedure, so there is room for diverse opinions.