

HEAVY TIE-DOWN TIPS

BY JERRY HIXSON

One winter's day while reading the posts from the Railroad Motorcar Maintenance group, the subject of securing our heavy cars to the trailers for highway travel came up. I, being in my 3rd year in the hobby, found the custom and modified speeder hauling trailers fascinating. This seems to be one part of the hobby that is very creative and open to a lot of different ways to get the job done.

One post from Dick Forde said we should use chain to tie down all four corners of our heavy cars to the trailer. I was not happy with my current system of using one chain over the draw-bar at each end. The idea of having two chains at each end sounded a lot safer.

Looking into what was available I found a weldable "D" ring at my local welding supply store. Fairmont's use of heavy duty channel steel in their larger cars makes it easy to find a strong place to weld it to. I chose to mount the "D" rings on the four outer corners of the frame channels. Then using four short chains with binders I put tension out from each corner with the car centered in the Middle.

I like chains for tie downs for the simple fact that chains will take lots of abuse and do not lose their strength. The nylon straps are good when new and kept in good condition, but lose a lot of strength rapidly when worn or frayed. Remember "when in doubt throw it out".

Finally, check your load. Wiggle the load; there should be no movement between the trailer and the load. Your speeder and trailer should be as one before you hit the road.

The different types of rails and wheel stops on your trailer are important also, but that's another story.



All photos by author.