

# Take care of your trailer



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

### Trailer Safety

You can always tell it is summer in the mountains, because most of the vehicles are dragging a trailer of one type or another. Through my own personal calculations, I think that over the course of the average outdoor person's life, he or she will own around a dozen trailers. These will include boat trailers, motorcycle or snowmobile trailers, cargo, RV and camping trailers, utility trailers and possibly more. I'm just as guilty as I have towed a trailer for most of my outdoor life.

Admittedly, most of my trailers were for boats. We had race boats, flats boats, offshore boats, hunting skiffs, and dive boats. All of them came with a trailer, and the number one greatest truth is the lights don't work.

The trailer light problem is greatest among boaters because the lights are often submerged when launching the boat. There are "water-proof" lights available, but they only work for a couple launches. The light problem is most severe for saltwater use trailers. Someone who has problems with submerged lights on a camping trailer probably has bigger

problems then blown light bulbs.

The lights come with a wiring kit, including a harness, lights, and seven miles of multi-colored wire. One would logically conclude that there is a set number of possible combinations that four wires from a plug can hook to two lights. I am not very good at math, but I think the number of possible wiring combinations number in the thousands. I have yet to stumble on the correct combination but someday hope to hit upon the number and will report back to you here.

Trailers are often neglected, sitting outside in the elements all year long, until called into service. Most people neglect maintenance, and that can spell disaster on the road. For all of you trailer folks out there, I offer some safety advice for you, before you take to the roads this summer, starting with the lights.

Lights are always taken for granted, but if the lights on your trailer aren't illuminated, other drivers may not see your vehicle, especially at night. The plug that connects the trailer lights to the vehicle gets corroded, wires break, or bulbs burn out. Have a partner stand behind the vehicle while it is in park, and run a check on brake, turn signals, taillights, and marker lights, every time you hook up the trailer.

Tires are another area often overlooked. Even though they might have plenty of tread, older tires can be dangerous. Older tires are subject to tread separation and other degradations when they go bad by age. Most tire manufac-

urers recommend all tires be replaced after 6 years, regardless of tread wear. This is especially true of trailer tires that live outside in the elements all year long.

There is a long U.S. Department of Transportation Tire Identification Number on the sidewall of all tires. This usually starts with the letters DOT, but the area to pay attention to is the last 4 digits at the end. They represent the week and year tire was made. For example, 1418 would mean the tires were made during the 14th week of 2018. You might be surprised how long ago the tires you just purchased were made.

Trailers tires need to have their inflation checked before every road trip. I usually fill mine to the max number shown on the sidewall as it promotes better tire wear when the trailer is loaded down. While you have the tire gauge out, check the tire pressure on the tow vehicle and spare also.

Speaking of spares, carry a spare for your trailer. You don't want to have to leave the trailer on the side of the road while you carry a tire off to find a town somewhere.

Trailer tires run on wheel bearings, and they must be properly packed with grease. This is a major problem for boat trailers. The wheels are often submerged when splashing the boat. Warm wheel bearing compartments will suck water in when submerged into cold water. The water will slowly corrode the bearing, causing a failure of the bearing when it locks up or overheats. At least every spring, have the bearing



This utility trailer spends 95% of its time next to my garage. The lights don't work. (Photo/Mark Rackay)

checked, replaced if needed, and repacked with marine grease. It is not a bad idea to carry extra wheel bearings, hubs and seals in your trailer box.

It is very important to stay within the trailer's maximum load capacity, and even more important to position the load properly. You must have a tongue weight of 10-15% of the total weight of the loaded trailer. Be certain the load is distributed evenly between the left and right sides of the trailer. This will ensure the trailer will follow along nice and straight behind the tow vehicle and not wander back and forth across the highway.

Smaller trailers may not need trailer brakes, but heavier trailers, camping trailers, and large boat trailers will usually require a braking system. Whether your trailer is equipped with hydraulic surge brakes or electric brakes, make sure the emergency breakaway cable is properly attached to the tow vehicle. While you are there, check the safety chains and make sure they

are adjusted properly and securely attached. Failure to check the trailer brakes might cause the trailer to pass the tow vehicle on the downhill side of a mountain pass.

I should mention something about having the right sized trailer ball to attach the trailer tongue to the tow vehicle. These come in 3 sizes, 1 7/8", 2", and 2 5/8", are the general sizes, but for our purposes, they come in too large or too small.

If you use the too big trailer ball, you spend your time jumping up and down on the trailer tongue, trying to get it to fit on the trailer ball. If you use the too small trailer ball, you have to use a piece of rope to tie down the trailer tongue or else it will bounce off while you drive down the road. Neither option is acceptable. Use the correct size. Remember, trailers can be an evil contraption, and will use the most inaccessible, desolate, and dark location, to cause a catastrophic failure.

Trailers are a necessary evil for outdoor people.

We need them to haul all the toys and equipment to the mountains for us to properly recreate. People with campers and RVs are hauling around their temporary home. Unfortunately, we will continue to need the trailer because all this junk won't fit in a station wagon, especially if you add a boat. Be safe and make sure everything is in tip top shape before you go, and if you figure out the lights, give me a call.

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# Crawford State Park invites public to Pioneer Days fireworks, state park history book party

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

CRAWFORD, Colo. – Crawford State Park will offer free admission to visitors Saturday, June 14 as part of the Crawford Pioneer Days festivities that culminate in a fireworks display.

The annual community festival, now in its 46th year, will bring an action-packed day to the park. Day-use fees will be waived Saturday, though those in the park Sunday will need to have a valid park pass.

During this year's celebration, CPW will also host a party at the park to commemorate the release of CPW's state parks history book titled "At Home in Nature." The event will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. at the visitor center.

As part of the book release party, there will be prize raffles for Osprey day packs, Yeti tumblers, camp

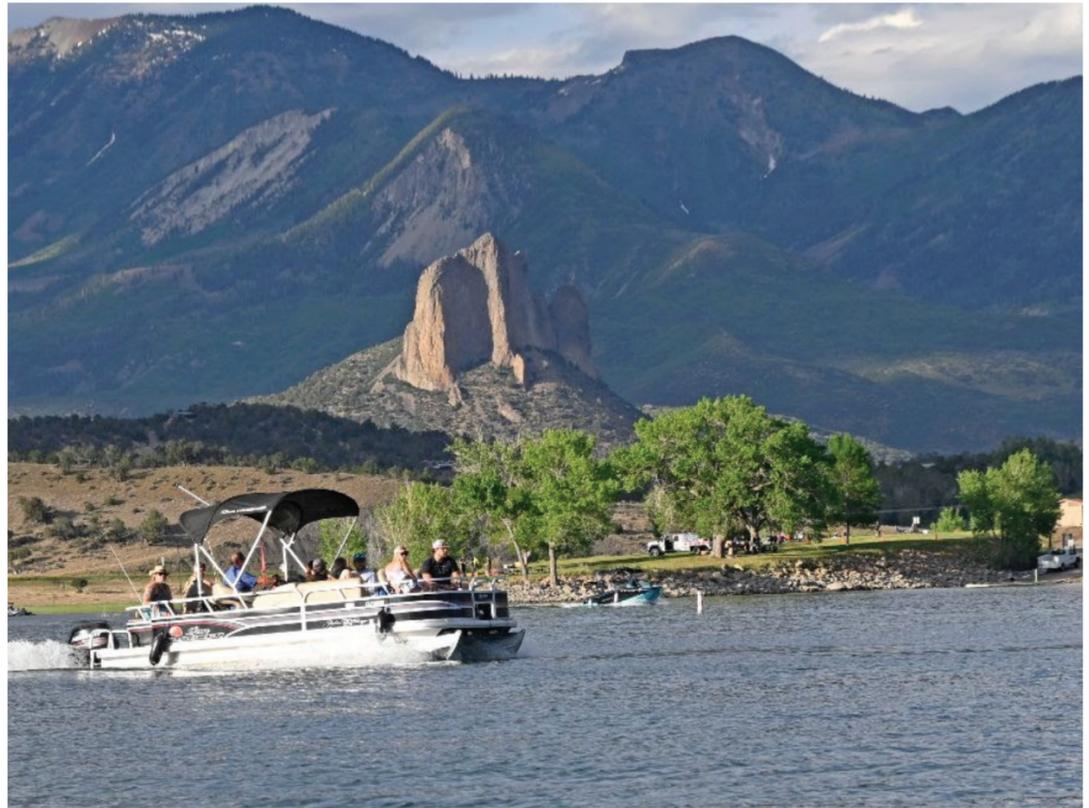
chairs, book copies and more. Regularly priced at \$38.95, guests attending Crawford State Park on Saturday may also purchase "At Home in Nature" at a discount.

After the book party, stay in the park for a fireworks extravaganza put on by the local fire department. The show will begin at dusk and last approximately 45 minutes.

"We've been happy to host this fireworks show for nearly 40 years," Park Manager Scott Rist said. "It's a wonderful family event, and we enjoy welcoming visitors from all over the region."

Rist reminds the public to exercise patience while entering and exiting the park. As many as 250 vehicles typically enter and exit the park for the fireworks show.

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Boaters enjoy Crawford Reservoir during the 2024 Pioneer Days weekend. (Photo/John Livingston/CPW)

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