



Towing Four wheels down

By K. STEPHEN BUSICK, F45180

If you have attended an FMCA rally or convention in recent years or even observed coaches on the road, you don't need to be told that most FMCA members tow a vehicle behind their motorhome. In fact, membership surveys have indicated that approximately 80 percent tow a vehicle. While some members use a trailer or tow dolly, many members flat tow; that is, the towed vehicle has all four wheels on the ground with a tow bar connecting it to the coach.

While members may tow vehicles that are not listed here, the information used to compile this list is what was provided to *FMC* by those we feel are the ultimate authorities in this matter — the vehicle manufacturers. Keep in mind that the information pertains specifically to year 2000 vehicles and may or may not be correct for earlier or later models. But even for 2000 models, the informa-



Toyota Corolla

tion can change. Also please keep in mind that while one vehicle with a particular model name may be approved by the manufacturer for towing, motorhomers should not

A guide to year 2000 vehicles that manufacturers have indicated can be flat towed without significant modifications.

assume that all vehicles with that model name can be towed four wheels down, as variations exist.

It is very important that you check the owners manual of any vehicle you intend to tow to ensure that the vehicle is capable of doing what you want it to do. That is also a good time to check for specific directives for that vehicle regarding towing, ignition lock position, accessories, spare tires, and other items of concern.

If a vehicle you already own or wish to purchase is not listed here, the use of a tow dolly, a trailer, or an aftermarket device that enables flat towing of some vehicles may be the correct choice for you. A company called Remco (P.O. Box 27998, Omaha, NE 68127; 800-228-2481) makes driveline modification products for many cars and trucks with automatic transmissions. These products can be installed to adapt certain front- and rear-wheel-drive vehicles for flat towing.

The importance of safety in towing cannot be overemphasized. Accidents are never enjoyable, but they can be even worse for motorhomers. Because of how and where we drive our coaches and towed vehicles, our accidents often occur some distance from home and away from the security that it can provide. This means that everything, not just the tow bar and hitch, must be properly selected, installed, maintained, and used. Even the coach needs to be selected with towing in mind; some coaches should not tow anything because of overloading issues. If you've never had your coach weighed, it's a good idea to do so before selecting a towed vehicle. Whichever vehicle you choose to tow, make sure your motorhome has the capacity to tow it safely.

And it's a good idea to weigh the towed vehicle before you purchase it. Approximate curb weights for the vehicles have been listed in the charts. Keep in mind that weights vary from vehicle to vehicle depending on equipment, and fuel and any other items you put in the vehicle will increase the weight.

Do not let yourself be distracted when hooking up your towed vehicle. We've all heard stories of someone who forgot to connect his or her safety chains or latch the hitch properly but was fortunate enough that nothing bad happened — that time. Others are not so lucky. Frequently check and maintain all of the towing equipment. Bolts come loose, metal bends, and welds do break. If a piece of equipment fails as you're traveling down the road, great personal and financial damage could result.

Although the laws of some jurisdictions do not require brakes on towed vehicles, the laws of physics still apply. Most drivers would not consider towing a two-ton load of bricks on a trailer that was not equipped with brakes, but some people tow a two-ton vehicle without supplemental brakes. Of course, when trying to stop, the brakes on the coach cannot tell the difference between 4,000 pounds of bricks and 4,000 pounds of vehicle. Check the owners manual of the coach or chassis for the requirements regarding auxiliary brakes.

Just as there is no single coach that is best for everyone to drive, there is no best vehicle for everyone to tow. However, chances are there is a best vehicle and method for you personally. Talk with your friends and do all the research you can. Then, go shopping. Think safety, and have fun.



Suzuki Grand Vitara

The specific vehicle information contained in this article came directly from the manufacturers and from owners manuals. It is meant to be a guide to selecting a towed vehicle. Consult the individual vehicle owners manuals for more details regarding towing procedures, modifications, and safety issues. If you have an owners manual for a year 2000 vehicle that contains information different from that published here, please contact the manufacturer to see if the information has been changed since the manual was printed. If the manufacturer says the information in the manual is still correct, please notify us about any conflicting information.

continued



Chevrolet Metro LSI Coupe



Dodge Neon



Ford Ranger 4x4

CHEVROLET/GMC	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Cavalier (four-speed automatic only)	✓		Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,617–2,838
Cavalier		✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,617–2,838
*Malibu	✓		Front-wheel drive	65/None stated	3,051–3,077
**Metro		✓	Front-wheel drive	55/None stated	1,895–1,984
Tracker 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	***55/200	2,723–2,987

*Malibu: To prevent battery drain while towing, certain fuses must be removed from the instrument panel fuse block.

**Metro: Five-speed manual only.

***Tracker: After 200 miles of towing, the engine must be allowed to idle for a few minutes before continuing. See owners manual.

DODGE/PLYMOUTH	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Neon		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	2,559
Ram 4x4 (1500 series)	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	5,350
Dakota 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,573
Durango 4x4	✓		Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,725

FORD	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Escort Sedan		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,468
Escort ZX2		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,478
Focus		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,551
*F-150 4x4 (lever-operated only)	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,299
Ranger 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	None stated	3,068
Ranger 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	3,462
Super Duty F-Series (lever-operated only)	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	5,500
**Explorer 4x4 V-6 Control-Trac	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,045
**Mountaineer 4x4 V-6 Control-Trac	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,045

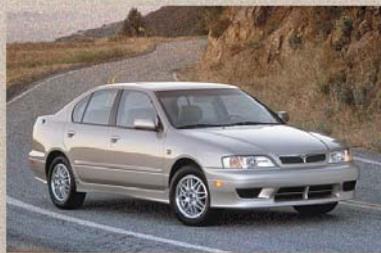
*F-150 4x4: The center disconnect must be locked out by capping off one of the front-axle vacuum motor lines. See dealer for assistance.

**Explorer/Mountaineer: Control-Trac 4x4 models must be equipped with Neutral Tow Kit, part number F672-7H332-AA, activated by the dealer.

continued



Jeep Wrangler Sahara



Infiniti G20



Kia Sportage

*HONDA	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
**CR-V	✓	✓	Real Time 4WD	None stated	3,126

*See "Honda Towing" on page 82.

**Follow prescribed towing procedure outlined in owners manual.

INFINITI	Transmission		Drive Configuration	*Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
G20		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	2,956
I30		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	3,150

*G20, I30: After towing 500 miles, idle the engine in "neutral" for several minutes to circulate fluids.

JEEP	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Cherokee 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	3,015–3,353
Grand Cherokee 4x4	✓		Four-wheel drive	None stated	3,772–4,083
Wrangler	✓	✓	Part-time 4WD	None stated	3,094–3,333

KIA	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*Sportage 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	55/None stated	3,352

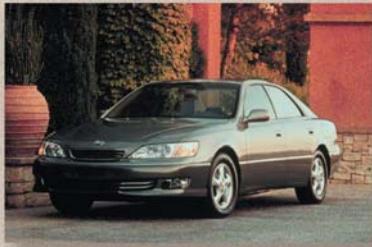
*With manual locking hubs only; follow owners manual towing parameters and place the levers in the "free" position.

LAND ROVER	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*Discovery Series II	✓		Permanent 4WD	None stated	4,600
**Range Rover	✓		Permanent 4WD	None stated	4,960

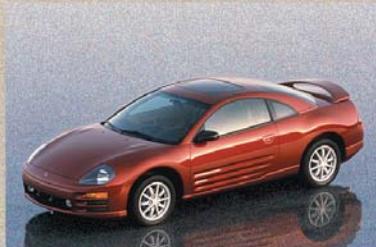
*Discovery Series II: With the handbrake applied, set the main gearbox in "park" and the transfer box in "neutral." Turn starter switch to position "I" to unlock steering, and then to position "II" for brake light/turn signal operation.

**Range Rover: Insert a fuse (5 amps or greater) in fuse position "II." (See owners manual for procedure.)

continued



Lexus ES300



Eclipse GS



Frontier Crew Cab SE

*LEXUS	Transmission		Drive Configuration	**Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
ES 300	✓		Front-wheel drive	55/200	3,373
RX 300 2WD	✓		Front-wheel drive	55/200	3,900
RX 300 4WD	✓		Four-wheel drive	55/200	3,900

*Lexus cautions that towing requires special equipment and accessories; see your motorhome manufacturer or service outlet for recommended towing equipment. Lexus also notes that these vehicles will not sustain internal damage to the transmission or transfer components when towed, but towing these vehicles does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems (body, chassis, electrical systems, etc.). The transmission must be placed in the "neutral" position when flat towing.

**After 200 miles of towing, let the engine idle for more than three minutes.

MITSUBISHI	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Mirage Coupe DE & LS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,183–2,293
Mirage Sedan DE		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,437
Eclipse RS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,935
Eclipse GS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,985
Eclipse GT		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	3,120

NISSAN	Transmission		Drive Configuration	*Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Altima XE, SE, GXE		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	2,851
Maxima GXE, SE		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	3,186
Sentra XE, SE, GXE		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	2,548
Frontier Crew Cab XE, SE 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	60/500	3,742
**Frontier Crew Cab XE, SE 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	60/500	4,034
Pathfinder SE 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	60/500	3,907
**Pathfinder SE 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	60/500	4,158
Xterra XE, SE 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	60/500	3,668
**Xterra XE, SE 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	60/500	3,504

*All Nissan vehicles: After towing 500 miles, idle the engine in "neutral" for several minutes to circulate fluids.

**Four-wheel-drive Frontier, Pathfinder, and Xterra: The transfer lever must be placed in 2HI.

continued

OLDSMOBILE	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*Alero	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,100

*Certain fuses should be removed to prevent battery drain while towing. See owners manual for instructions.

PONTIAC	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Grand Am SE	✓		Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,091
Sunfire (four-speed automatic only)	✓		Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,606
Sunfire		✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,606

SATURN	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
L Series	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,910
SC Series	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,367
SL Series	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,331
SW Series	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,452

SUBARU	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Impreza L Sedan		✓	All-wheel drive	None	2,735
Impreza L Sport Wagon		✓	All-wheel drive	None	2,835
Legacy Brighton Wagon		✓	All-wheel drive	None	3,265
Legacy L Sedan		✓	All-wheel drive	None	3,245
Outback Sport		✓	All-wheel drive	None	2,860
Forester		✓	All-wheel drive	None	3,125
Outback		✓	All-wheel drive	None	3,415

SUZUKI	Transmission		Drive Configuration	*Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Grand Vitara JLX, JLX+, Limited	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	Legal/200	3,197
Vitara 4 Door JX, JLX	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	Legal/200	2,987-3,020
Vitara 2 Door JX, JLX	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	Legal/200	2,723-2,844

*Automatic transmission: Stop towing the vehicle every 200 miles. With transfer lever still in "neutral," start engine, shift into "drive," and rev the engine for one minute to circulate oil in the transfer case. Shift into "park" before next towing.

*Manual transmission: Stop towing every 200 miles and leave the transmission in second gear. With the transfer lever still in "neutral," start the engine and rev it for one minute with the clutch engaged to circulate oil in the transfer case.

continued

*TOYOTA	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Camry		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	3,000–3,240
Celica GT		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,425–2,600
Celica GT-S		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,500–2,720
Celica GT-S	✓		Front-wheel drive	55/200	2,500–2,720
Corolla		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,414–2,524
Echo		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,150
RAV4 2WD		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,500–2,700
RAV4 4WD		✓	Four-wheel drive	None	2,700–2,900

*Toyota cautions that towing requires special equipment and accessories; see your motorhome manufacturer or service outlet for recommended towing equipment. Toyota also notes that these vehicles will not sustain internal damage to the transmission or transfer components when towed, but towing these vehicles does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems (body, chassis, electrical systems, etc.). The transmission must be placed in the “neutral” position when flat towing.

VOLVO	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
S70		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	3,152
V70		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	3,259

Honda Towing

As noted in the accompanying story, the Honda CR-V — equipped with automatic or manual transmission — is the only Honda vehicle endorsed by the company for towing four wheels down. To prevent transmission damage to the CR-V, however, the company requires the user to shift from “drive” and then into “neutral” before turning off the engine when hooking the car up for towing. The specific procedure is laid out in the owners manual. The CR-V features Real Time 4WD, Honda’s part-time four-wheel-drive system that activates when the front tires begin to spin (as on snow or ice). During normal operation, the CR-V functions as a front-wheel-drive vehicle.

Following is a letter FMC received from American Honda Motor Co. Inc. regarding the towing of automobiles equipped with the Honda drivetrain. The letter pertains to all models except the CR-V, Passport, and Acura SLX.

Honda owners manuals advise against towing at more than 35 mph or for more than 50 miles. However, this recommendation exists primarily because Honda has not conducted formal towing tests of their cars at higher speeds and for greater distances.

We are not aware of any particular problems being caused by towing any 1988 or prior year Honda/Acura automobile, with either manual or automatic transmission, with or without power steering, regardless of towing speed or mileage.

1989 and subsequent model year Honda/Acura automobiles have minor changes to the automatic transmission. If a 1989 or subsequent model year Honda/Acura must be towed with the front or all four wheels on the ground, we recommend the fol-

lowing before towing:

1. Check to be sure the transmission fluid level is full.
2. Release the parking brake.
3. Start the engine.
4. Shift the transmission from Park to Drive.
5. Shift from Drive to Neutral.
6. Turn off the engine; leave the key in the Accessory (I) position.
7. Make sure the radio and all accessories are turned off.

NOTICE: The steering system can be damaged if the steering wheel is locked. Always leave the key in the Accessory (I) position to prevent damage to the steering system when towing behind another vehicle.

CAUTION: SEVERE AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION DAMAGE WILL OCCUR IF THE CAR IS SHIFTED FROM REVERSE TO NEUTRAL AND THEN TOWED WITH THE DRIVE WHEELS ON THE GROUND.

We do recommend starting the engine and shifting the automatic transmission, if so equipped, through the gears approximately every 500 miles and shifting from Drive to Neutral before shutting off the engine.

For all manual transmission automobiles, release the parking brake, shift the transmission to neutral, and turn the ignition key to the Accessory (I) position to release the steering wheel lock. Make sure that the radio and all accessories are turned off.

Although experience has shown that the Honda/Acura transmission and powertrain are capable of being “motorhome towed,” American Honda does not assume responsibility for any vehicle damage or liabilities incurred due to the towing device, towing vehicle, lighting hookup, or other towing equipment or towing procedures; any responsibility for these items is assumed by the owner/operator. 