

Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command

Customer and Carrier Advisory

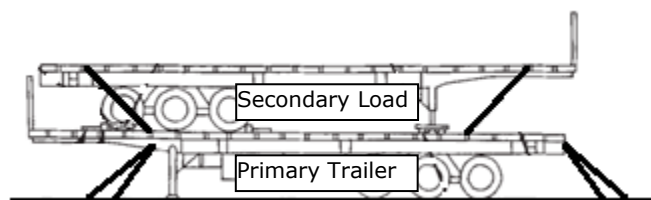
October 6, 2023

CA-23-10-06/0074

Subject: Wheeled or Tracked Systems as Secondary Rail Loads for CONUS rail transport.

Purpose: To inform Department of Defense shippers and railcar tiedown crews that wheeled or tracked systems as secondary loads on trailers, cargo beds, and flatracks do not have specific Association of American Railroads (AAR) guidance. The servicing rail carriers have full discretion to allow or disallow wheeled or tracked systems as secondary rail loads.

Be Advised: The AAR Open Top Loading Rules (OTLRs) has limited guidance for general secondary loads and no specific guidance for wheeled or tracked systems as secondary loads on cargo trailers, cargo beds, or PLS trucks. The OTLRs Section 1 - General Rules states that any secondary load must be secured to the requirements in Rule 5.3.1. This means that a wheeled or tracked system as secondary load must be restrained to a trailer, flatrack, or cargo bed with the same restraint as if the secondary load were restrained by itself directly to the railcar.



The level of restraint in Rule 5.3.1 is very difficult to achieve for a wheeled or tracked system as a secondary load on trailers, flatracks, or cargo beds. Vehicles and trailers are restrained to railcars using 55,000-pound strength rail chains. No trailer, flatrack, or cargo bed comes with 55,000-pound chains to secure a small wheeled or tracked vehicle to it; therefore, multiple trailer, flatrack, or cargo bed chains are required to equal the restraint of a single rail chain. This likely results in the secondary vehicle's provisions unable to physically accept the additional required chains or that all the additional chains cannot be installed without interference of each other. Additionally, even if the required number of chains can be applied from the secondary vehicle to the trailer, flatrack, or cargo bed, the resulting chain angles still may not provide the required longitudinal restraint of Rule 5.3.1. SDDCTEA recommends getting pre-approval from the servicing railroads for wheeled or tracked systems as secondary rail loads.

Webstraps are not approved by the AAR for securing loads longitudinally or laterally, they are only recognized to provide vertical restraint. This applies to secondary loads as well. The elasticity of webstraps does not provide enough restraint longitudinally or laterally to resist the shock forces encountered during rail transport, and they are not as resistant to wear and harsh environmental conditions.

(Download a free copy of the complete AAR OTRs Section 1 and Section 6 at: <https://my.aar.org/otlr>)

The railroads generally will not approve small wheeled or tracked systems as secondary loads on PLS trucks. PLS trucks have tires and suspensions that greatly compress and recoil during rail impact testing that puts additional stress on the chains holding the secondary vehicle to the truck. The web straps that come standard with PLS flatracks cannot be used to secure a secondary vehicle for rail transport. Stacks of empty flatracks on the PLS trucks that are interconnected through the ISO twist locks on the flatrack decks are allowed up to stacks of 6 high on the PLS truck and 5 high on a PLS trailer.

Only the M872 series trailers have OTRs Section 6 loading figures that allows like empty trailers to be double stacked as a secondary load (figures 200-A, B, and C). All other wheeled or tracked systems as secondary loads are allowed only at the discretion of the servicing railroads. Additional factors like rail/route clearances must also be considered.

Examples of Disallowed Secondary Loads:

NOTE: All of these loads used webstraps to secure the secondary item to primary truck/trailer which is not allowed per AAR rules.







Please contact SDDCTEA for any questions on securing wheeled or tracked systems as secondary loads.

POC: SDDCTEA Transportability Branch, 618-220-5254;
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Expiration: N/A

Category: Rail