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Tips for Secured Vehicle Loads During Post-Holiday Clean Up

Don't Trash Arizona encourages proper and safe transportation of Christmas trees to recycle centers

PHOENIX (Dec. 18, 2012) – As the holiday season comes to a close, it is time to store the decorations, take down the tree and greet the new year. Throughout Maricopa County, there are several locations for residents to drop off their Christmas trees for recycling, and [Don't Trash Arizona](#) wants to ensure that the trees arrive at these sites without littering the freeways, becoming a dangerous road hazard. The [Maricopa Association of Government's](#) (MAG) anti-littering campaign offers tips for transporting trees safely and securely on the region's highways.

“Unsecured loads on vehicles can fall into traffic, causing accidents and delays on our freeways. With so many residents and visitors on our roadways this time of year, it's more important than ever to ensure everyone's safety while transporting holiday decorations and Christmas trees to recycling centers,” said Avondale Mayor and MAG Chair Marie Lopez Rogers. “In Maricopa County, 83 traffic accidents were reported in 2010 due to falling objects on freeways, and on average, one person dies in our county every year from these debris-related accidents. It's within our power as motorists to prevent tragedy and make it a safe holiday season.”

Don't Trash Arizona encourages the recycling of Christmas trees and recommends visiting individual [city websites](#) for locations to deliver the trees for proper disposal. The campaign offers the following tips to drivers to keep the roadways clear of debris by securing their vehicle loads:

- **Tie it Down:** Similar to when trees are picked up in anticipation for the holiday season, used trees need to be strapped down. This is easier to achieve when the branches are first tied down around the tree. Once the tree is held tightly together, drivers should securely strap the tree directly to their vehicles with rope, bungee cords or netting. The tree, just like with any large load, should be able to withstand winds up to 70 miles per hour while on the freeway.
- **Cover it Up:** Drivers should cover the tree with a sturdy tarp, canvas or netting to ensure smaller clippings and branches do not fly off while en route to the disposal site. It's important to remember to secure the tarp to the vehicle as well, so it does not become littered debris itself.
- **Point it in the Right Direction:** To avoid added headwind, which may loosen the branches, drivers should arrange the tree so that the stump end faces the front of the vehicle. And as a courtesy to others, trees that extend past the vehicle's bumper should have a reflective flag tied to the end to alert other drivers.
- **Double Check:** Loads can shift and tie downs become loose during transit. Remember to check the load frequently to make sure the top, back and sides are all secured throughout the trip. In addition to strong winds, the load should be able to withstand sudden braking and hitting bumps while on the road.
- **Ask Yourself:** Drivers should ask themselves these questions before heading out on the road with a large load, such as a used Christmas tree. “Is there any chance of debris falling or blowing out of my vehicle?” “Would I feel safe if I was driving behind my vehicle?” “What would happen to my load if I had to brake suddenly or if I hit a bump?”

The [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#) estimates more than 25,000 crashes per year are caused by vehicle-related road debris, resulting in 80 to 90 fatalities. Additional information on the hazards of unsecured loads is available on *Don't Trash Arizona's* website at www.DontTrashArizona.com.

About *Don't Trash Arizona*

Don't Trash Arizona is a joint effort between the Maricopa Association of Governments and the Arizona Department of Transportation to address the economic, safety, and health impacts of freeway litter along regional and state highways. The program is funded through Proposition 400, which was approved by voters in 2004. That funding encompasses litter pickup, sweeping, and landscape maintenance, as well as litter education and prevention. *Don't Trash Arizona* seeks to change attitudes, awareness, and most importantly, behavior, when it comes to roadway littering. Visit www.DontTrashArizona.com.

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