Headline: Deck the hauls: Keep tree secure

Deckhead: Use proper tools, practice safety when moving

It’s better to find out what is under the Christmas tree rather than finding out what it might be under.

AAA found that an estimated 85 million Americans plan to purchase a real Christmas tree and face the task of getting it home safely. It’s a chore that shouldn’t be taken lightly.

It’s no different than moving furniture, appliances or other large objects; and if it’s not secured properly, the tree could damage a vehicle’s paint, door seals and window frames. Even worse, it could become dislodged from the vehicle and become a danger to other drivers. Previous AAA research found that road debris caused more than 200,000 crashes during a four-year period, resulting in nearly 39,000 injuries and 500 deaths.

A AAA study revealed that 84 million Americans plan to purchase a real Christmas tree. It also found that 44% of those Americans would transport it by using unsafe methods. This includes 20% who would tie the tree to the roof without using a roof rack and 24% who planned to place it in the bed of a pickup truck unse­cured.

AAA offers these helpful tips to safely transport home a tree:

• Be sure to bring strong rope or nylon ratchet straps before leaving to purchase a real Christmas tree. Also bring a blan­ket, gloves and the proper vehicle. One with a roof rack is ideal, but a pickup, SUV, van or minivan can work, as well.

• Have the lot wrap the tree before loading it. Loose branch­es can also be secured with rope or twine to help protect the tree from damage.

• Place the tree on the roof rack or in the bed of the truck facing the front of the vehicle. If it doesn’t have a roof rack and is a SUV, CUV, van or minivan, place the tree inside. It might be more viable to borrow or rent a pickup if you don’t have one.

• Secure the tree at its bottom, center and top by using strong rope or nylon ratchet straps. Avoid using the twine offered by many tree outlets. Use fixed vehicle tie-down points and loop the rope and strap around the tree trunk above a branch to prevent side-to-side or front-to-rear movement.

• Once tied down, give the tree several strong tugs from var­ious angles to make sure it is secured in place and will not come loose.

• And drive slowly and take secondary roads, if possible. Higher speeds can create significant airflow that can dam­age a tree or challenge even the best tie-down methods.

Purchasing a Christmas tree adds to the magic of the hol­iday. It’s a family tradition filled with memories and yuletide cheer.

Complacency isn’t an option and it could put you on the naughty list.

Be safe and Deck the Hauls.

Cutline: KEEP IT TIGHT – Be sure to properly secure the tree to your vehicle on your way home. Image: Supamotion. Adobe Stock.