Towing Your GMC

A Primer on How to Avoid the Towing Blues

When you call the tow service provider representative:

1. TAKE A DEEP BREATH, CALM DOWN, SPEAK SOFTLY AND CLEARLY, TALK POLITELY, AND BE PATIENT!
2. Get the name and direct telephone number of the representative you are speaking to so you can call back "in case we get cut off."
3. Write their name of the representative, date and time of your conversation. Ask for, and be sure to get, a case or reference number.
4. Ask if/confirm that your conversation is being recorded.
5. Take lots of notes as to what is said! Repeat what the representative says in order to confirm what you have written in your notes.
6. Have a hard copy of the TOWING VEHICLE section (Page 0-4 & 0-5) out of Maintenance Manual X-7525 in your hand when you call the tow service provider.
7. Advise them that the GMC Motorhome MUST be towed from the front or put on a vehicle long enough to accommodate it; read them the sentence under TOWING AT REAR on page 0-5.
8. Ask if the tow company is insured and responsible for any damage suffered while the vehicle is under tow.
9. Ask for the name, phone number and with whom to speak at the shop where your GMC is to be towed if you don't have the option of choosing a repair facility.


Short Distance Towing


Long Distance Towing


Not Acceptible for Towing

10. Ask if the shop you are being towed to has experience working on front wheel drive GMC motorhomes manufactured between 1973 and 1978.
11. Most likely the representative won't be able to tell you if the shop has experience on a GMC. If this is the case and it is during normal business hours, call the shop yourself while you're waiting for the tow truck. Ask if they have any experience working on front wheel drive 1973-1978 GMC Motorhomes. Most likely they will not have any experience so call the tow service provider contact and pass that information on to them. Ask them how a shop with no experience working on a GMC could be qualified to do so?
12. When the tow vehicle arrives introduce your self to the driver and ask his name. If your wife/kids are with you introduce them too!
13. Ask the driver if they have ever towed a GMC Motorhome before. The answer will most likely be "no" so show him the copy of the TOWING VEHICLE section in the maintenance

manual and ask him to please take a minute and read it. He may see that it shows the GMC being raised with chains and note that's not how he's going to tow it. Mention to him that there are some items that relate to towing the vehicle no matter what system is used that he should be aware of.

14. Confirm with the tow vehicle driver that the tow vehicle has the capacity to lift a vehicle with a front Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) of 5000 pounds and tow a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of 13,000 pounds.
15. Confirm with the tow vehicle driver that the tow company is insured and is responsible for any damage suffered while the vehicle is under tow.
16. Before the GMC is raised by the front wheels or put on a trailer, raise the rear suspension to the maximum height and place the system in HOLD. This is to greatly reduce the likelihood of the rear dragging at some point in the process.
17. Before you depart under tow, go in the GMC and make sure the hand brake is off.
18. Before departing walk around the GMC and make sure all access doors are closed/secured and that there is sufficient clearance between the ground and any part of the GMC.
19. When you arrive at the shop make sure the rear suspension is still at the maximum height before the GMC is unloaded from a flatbed if being towed in this manner.
20. When you arrive at the shop ask if they have experience working on a 1973-1978 GMC.
21. Ask the shop if they have the Maintenance Manual, Parts Book, and special tools for a 1973-1978 GMC.
22. Ask the shop how long it will be before they can look at your GMC.
23. If you are unhappy with responses from the shop call the tow service provider and advise them. Ask if you can be taken to a facility that does have experience, manuals and tools!

All the above may sound pedantic but if "something happens" and you wind up in court you can easily demonstrate that you did your best to inform the tow service provider, the tow company and the repair shop of any special requirements for towing a GMC and repairing it.

At the end of the day it may all come to naught, but at least you won't kick yourself for not doing something you could/should have!

Regards,

Rob Mueller

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AUS '75 Avion-The Blue Streak TZE365V100428
USA '75 Avion-Double Trouble TZE365V100426

Editor's Note: Please be aware that when the Maintenance Manual was written wrecker and towing equipment was somewhat different than what is available today. Therefore, the method explained in the Maintenance Manual is what should be used if the towing company does not have recently developed equipment. However, in the 21st century many companies have trucks with extended underlift L-arms capable of raising the GMC's front end without harm to the engine, drivetrain or steering components and without the use of the wooden blocks and chains as shown. Further, at the time the Maintenance Manual was printed flat-bed carriers were also not as common as can be found today. The warning to not lift and two from the rear of the coach is still very valid and should not be allowed.

● Block both front and rear of the wheel diagonally opposite the jack position.

● Loosen but do not remove wheel nuts.

● JACKING AT FRONT—Place hydraulic jack on wood block near energy absorbing front bumper bracket. Place hook at flange of front cross-member. Pass chain under bumper and adjust chain length to snug fit on fork on top of jack (See figure 7).

● JACKING AT REAR—Place hydraulic jack on wood block close to rear suspension bracket (See figure 8). The hook is placed in the drainage slot under bracket. Adjust chain length so link will fit in fork at top of jack.

● Close valve at base of jack and insert jack handle.

● Always operate jack with slow, smooth motion.

● Raise vehicle so tire just clears surface, replace wheel and slightly tighten wheel nuts.

● Open valve at base of jack to lower, then fully tighten wheel nuts. Proper torque is 250 foot pounds.

CAUTION: *Use lug wrench provided to tighten wheel nuts securely if torque wrench is not available. (Follow the nut tightening sequence shown in WHEELS AND TIRES, Section 10 of this manual. At the earliest opportunity have wheel nut torque checked. This is necessary to help prevent loosening or stripping of the wheel nuts.*

TOWING VEHICLE

TOWING

Proper lifting and towing equipment is necessary to prevent damage to the vehicle during any towing operation. State (Provincial in Canada) and local laws applicable to vehicles to tow must be followed. No towing operation should be attempted which would jeopardize the safety of the wrecker operator, any bystanders or other motorists. Passengers should never ride in a towed vehicle for any reason.

NOTE: Since the vehicle could exceed the lift and GVW capacity of most sling type equipment, heavier equipment such as chains and spreader bar should be used. Also, a wrecker with at least 8,000 lbs. capacity should be used.

Vehicle may be towed on all six wheels, at speeds less than 35 MPH, for distances up to 50 miles, provided the final drive, axle, transmission, and steering system are otherwise normally operable. Use only towing equipment specifically designed for this purpose following the instructions of the towing equipment manufacturer. A separate safety chain system must be used. For such towing the steering must be unlocked, transmission in neutral and the parking brake released. Attachments must be to engine front crossmember. Do not attach to bumpers or associated brackets. Remember that power brakes and power steering assists will not be available when engine is inoperative.

TOWING AT FRONT

When towing the vehicle the air bellows in the rear suspension should be inflated to maximum capacity and then place the power level controls in "HOLD" (vehicles with power level option). On vehicles without the power level option, disconnect the height control valve link (figure 9) on each side of the vehicle. Raise the arm on each height control valve to inflate the air bellows to provide maximum ground clearance for the vehicle. The leveling valve can then be released to the neutral position. Tow chains should be attached to engine front crossmember (See figure 10). Note that a six inch length of 2" x 4" wood block must be placed on top of the engine

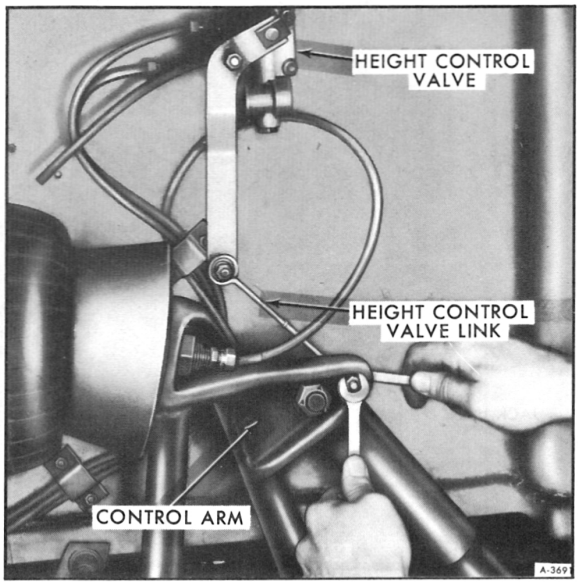

Figure 9—Disconnecting Height Control Valve Link

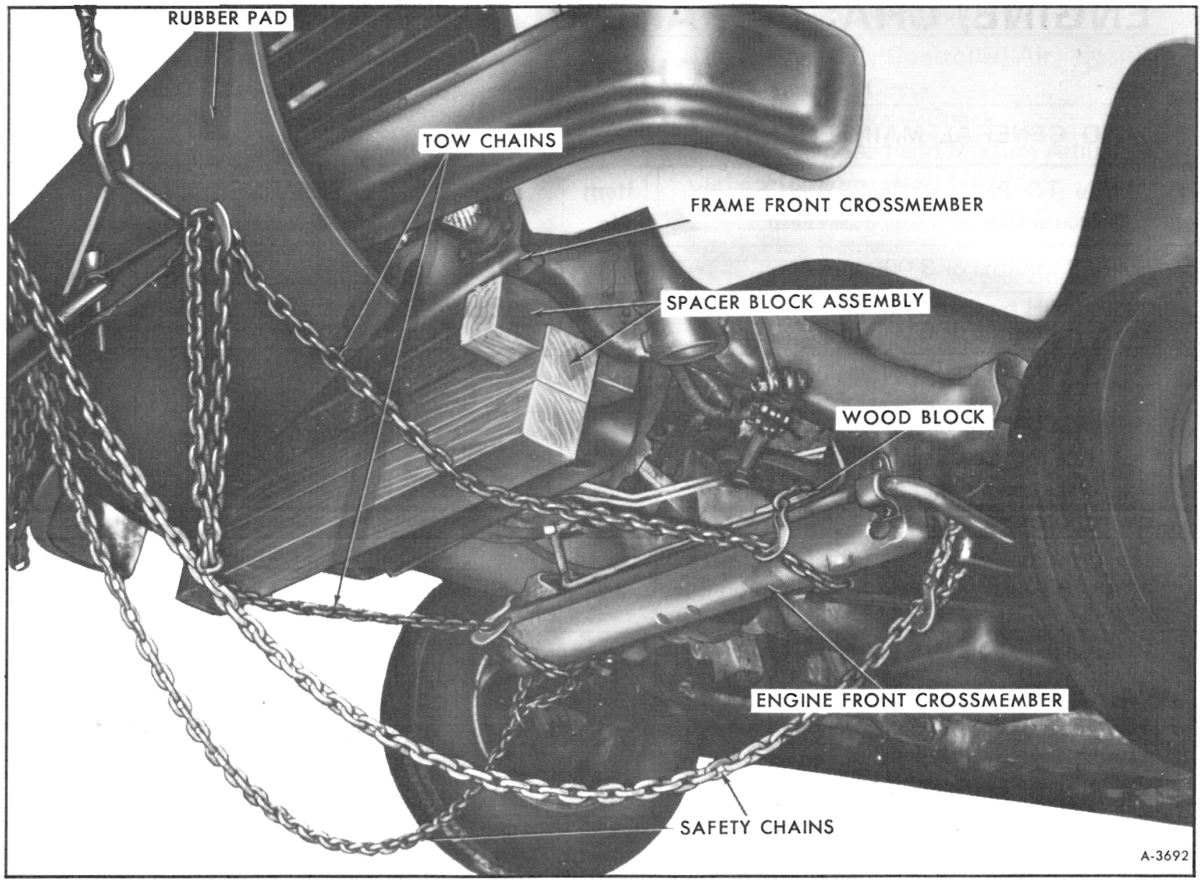

Figure 10—Towing Vehicle

front crossmember on the left side. The chain should then be attached around both the wood block and the engine front crossmember. Care should be taken so that the chain does not contact the fuel line on the engine front crossmember.

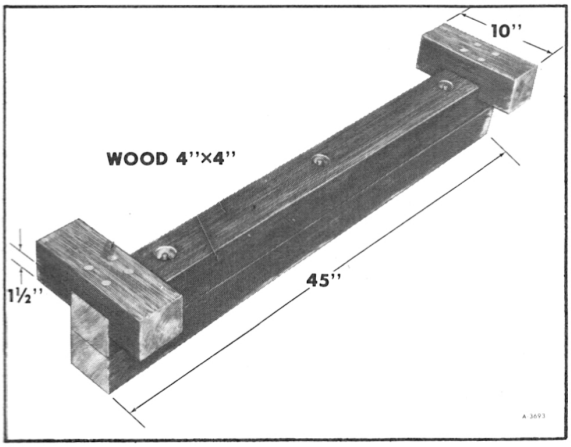

Figure 11—Spacer Block Assembly

CAUTION: *If the six inch length wood block is not installed, the towing chain could sever the fuel line on the engine front crossmember.*

A wood spacer block assembly should be placed under the front crossmember (See figure 10) to relieve some of the load from the energy absorbers and bumper. This spacer block assembly should be dimensioned, constructed of hardwood, and bolted together with three thru-bolts as shown in Figure 11.

Raising front of vehicle so front wheels are four inches off the ground will provide about five-inch ground clearance at the rear when towing. Separate safety chains should be attached to lower control arms.

TOWING AT REAR

It is not recommended that vehicle be towed with the rear raised as this could result in suspension or crossmember damage.