

How Truck Cargo Loading and Securement Violations Cause Jackknife and Rollover Crashes

A New Mexico Truck Accident Lawyer Who Fights for the Injured

Different types of commercial [truck accidents](#) occur for a wide range of reasons. But when it comes to rollover and jackknife truck crashes, truck cargo problems (whether the cargo was loaded improperly or shifted in transit) often result in severe accidents, especially among tractor-trailers and other large trucks.

Cargo securement failures are common enough that inspectors treat them as a standing enforcement priority. [Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance \(CVSA\)](#) data shows that roadside inspections account for tens of thousands of violations every year for loads that are not secured against shifting, spilling or falling from a commercial vehicle, and this category consistently ranks among the top reasons trucks are pulled off the road.

New Mexico truck accident attorney Andras Szantho of [Szantho Law Firm](#) knows how complicated and confusing these cases can be involving jackknife and rollover crashes. When a shifting or falling load causes a collision, determining who was at fault often requires a detailed investigation. Here's what New Mexico crash victims need to know about cargo securement violations.

What Do Federal Cargo Securement Rules Actually Require?

The [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration \(FMCSA\)](#) requires every commercial truck to be loaded and secured so cargo cannot leak, spill, blow off or fall from the vehicle. These [federal cargo securement regulations](#) cover everything from steel coils to loose lumber, and they apply on every public road in the country.

One of the most important rules involves the aggregate working load limit, which is the combined strength rating of every strap, chain or tie-down used to hold a load in place. Under [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Title 49, Subtitle B, Chapter III, Subchapter B, Part 393, Subpart I](#), that combined strength must equal at least half the weight of the cargo being secured, and heavier or irregularly shaped loads often require more.

These requirements apply to the motor carrier and the driver, and depending on who physically loaded the trailer, they can extend to a shipper or logistics company as well. A load that meets none of these standards is not a minor paperwork issue. It is a mechanical failure waiting for the right curve, gust of wind or sudden stop to expose it.

How Does an Unsecured Load Turn Into a Jackknife Crash?

[Jackknife truck accidents](#) happen when a trailer's wheels lose traction relative to the tractor pulling it, causing the trailer to swing out of alignment. Braking hard, taking a tight curve or reacting to sudden traffic can trigger this loss of control, and an unsecured load makes it far more likely to happen.

When cargo is not properly restrained, sudden braking sends its full weight sliding forward inside the trailer. That shift changes how the trailer handles at the exact moment the driver needs predictable control. A trailer that would have tracked straight with a secured load can swing violently once thousands of pounds of cargo move on their own.

Investigators can often trace a jackknife back to the load itself. Skid patterns, the position of cargo inside the wreckage and tie-down equipment recovered from the scene frequently show whether the trailer was secured to standard before the crash. That evidence becomes central to proving what actually caused the collision.

How Does Shifting Cargo Cause a Rollover on New Mexico Highways?

A commercial truck stays upright because its center of gravity remains low and centered over the axles. When cargo shifts to one side, that center of gravity moves with it, and the trailer becomes far more likely to tip during a turn, an evasive maneuver or a routine highway merge.

New Mexico's mountain grades and highway interchanges around Albuquerque and Santa Fe put extra strain on this balance. A load that would have stayed put on flat ground can shift enough on a banked curve or downhill grade to push a trailer past its tipping point. A tipped load is not simply an inconvenience. It is often the direct mechanical cause of a rollover that traps or injures occupants of nearby vehicles.

Rollover truck crashes involving shifted cargo tend to leave clear physical evidence. The distribution of cargo inside the wreckage, damage patterns on the trailer and the condition of the tie-down equipment can all point back to a securement failure that set the rollover in motion before the driver ever lost control of the wheel.

What Loading Mistakes Most Often Lead to These Crashes?

Most cargo securement failures come down to a small number of loading mistakes that repeat across the trucking industry. Understanding these common errors helps explain why a load that seemed fine at the dock can become dangerous once the truck is moving at highway speed. Common causes of truck crashes due to cargo loading mistakes include:

- **Overloaded trailers** - Cargo that exceeds a trailer's rated capacity puts more strain on every tie-down and increases the force involved if the load shifts during a sudden stop.
- **Uneven weight distribution** - Cargo loaded too far forward, too far back or heavier on one side changes how a trailer handles and makes it easier to tip on a curve.
- **Insufficient tie-down strength** - Straps and chains rated below the required aggregate working load limit can stretch, snap or release under normal driving stress.
- **Missing or damaged dunnage** - Blocking and bracing material that is worn, cracked or absent leaves gaps for cargo to shift into during transit.

- **No re-check after the first miles** - Loads that are not inspected again after the initial miles of a trip can loosen without anyone noticing until it is too late.

Each of these mistakes is preventable with basic loading discipline and a pre-trip inspection. When one or more of them shows up in a crash investigation, it points directly to a party who failed to meet a legal loading standard.

Who Can Be Held Responsible for a Cargo Securement Failure?

Liability (the legal responsibility to pay for harm caused to someone else) in a cargo securement case often extends beyond the truck driver. Because loading involves several parties working together, more than one company can share responsibility for a crash caused by a shifting or falling load.

The driver has an independent duty to inspect the load before departure and refuse to drive with an unsafe trailer. The motor carrier that employs the driver can be held responsible for failing to train drivers properly or for pressuring them to skip pre-trip inspections in order to meet a delivery schedule.

Shippers and third-party loading companies can also face liability if they packed or secured the trailer themselves. Freight brokers who arranged the shipment may share responsibility if they knew about unsafe loading practices and did nothing to address them. Sorting out which party actually loaded the trailer is often the first step in building a claim.

How Does a Securement Violation Strengthen a Negligence Claim?

Proving negligence normally requires showing that a party failed to act with reasonable care. Negligence per se (a legal doctrine allowing a violation of a safety law to serve as proof of negligence) can simplify that burden significantly when a federal cargo securement rule was broken.

If an investigation confirms that a trailer's tie-downs fell short of the required aggregate working load limit, that violation alone can support a negligence claim without the need to separately argue what a reasonable carrier would have done. The regulation itself sets the standard, and failing to meet it becomes the evidence.

This often depends on many factors, including whether the violation can be tied directly to the cause of the crash. A minor paperwork error carries far less weight than a securement failure that investigators can connect to the specific way the trailer lost control. Building that connection is where a thorough investigation matters most.

What Evidence Proves a Cargo Securement Violation Caused the Crash?

Cargo securement cases depend heavily on documentation that trucking companies are required to keep, much of which can be lost or destroyed within months of a crash. Acting quickly to preserve this evidence often determines whether a claim can be proven at all. Such evidence can include:

- **Bills of lading and weight tickets** - These records show what cargo was on the trailer, how much it weighed and how it was described at pickup.
- **Roadside inspection reports** - Past inspection history can reveal whether a carrier had a pattern of securement violations before the crash occurred.
- **Photos of the crash scene and debris field** - The position of cargo, broken tie-downs and trailer damage can show exactly how the load failed.
- **Dispatch and loading records** - These documents can reveal who packed the trailer and whether the carrier pressured the driver to skip inspection steps.
- **Driver and loader statements** - Firsthand accounts from the people who loaded or inspected the trailer often fill in details the physical evidence cannot.

Preserving this evidence early gives an investigation the best chance of showing exactly which loading decision caused the crash. Once these records are gone, proving how a trailer was loaded becomes far more difficult, even when the physical damage clearly points to a securement failure.

How Can a New Mexico Truck Accident Lawyer Help After a Cargo Securement Crash?

Trucking companies, cargo companies and their insurance providers often act fast to protect their best interests after a truck accident involving cargo errors or loading mistakes. Instead of working with you to make sure you receive the support and compensation you deserve, many of these businesses work hard to pay you as little as possible or nothing at all.

At [Szantho Law Firm](#), we understand the seriousness and the urgency of your New Mexico truck accident. That's why we won't waste a minute getting right to work on your legal case. We investigate cargo securement failures many different ways, including obtaining loading records, reviewing the truck's inspection history, and examining physical evidence from the wreckage itself. We also identify which company loaded the trailer, whether all federal standards were followed, and whether the driver or carrier ignored warning signs before the crash.

We work to hold every responsible party accountable, not just the driver behind the wheel. That's how New Mexico truck accident attorney Andras Szantho achieves success in case after case. Results don't happen by accident. Hard work wins cases. Learn more about how our law firm can help you. [Contact us](#) for a free case evaluation.