

PREPARING FOR STORMS

Protecting your Caravan

Due to their light weight construction, caravans are particularly susceptible to wind damage and are prone to being blown over during storms and strong winds.

All caravan users need to be well prepared by having an emergency plan well before bad weather is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au. You should decide what you will do with your caravan, know how to tie it down and where you will go if a storm or strong winds threatens the area.

This applies to people staying in caravan parks, travelling with caravans or with caravans parked on their properties.

Even if your caravan is securely tied down you should seek shelter when warned of very strong winds.

Your tie down preparations should comprise of three steps. All three steps must be completed to secure your caravan when strong winds are forecast. None of these steps are sufficient on their own.

Step 1: Chassis tie down

The chassis tie down step is designed to prevent the van from being blown off its supports. This step can be done early even when there is no forecast for strong winds.

Apply the hand brake and wheel chocks to your caravan.

Jack the van up onto concrete blocks. If left sitting on the wheels the suspension enables the van to move, lessening the effectiveness of the tie downs.

Check that suitable anchor points have been installed on your van site or backyard.

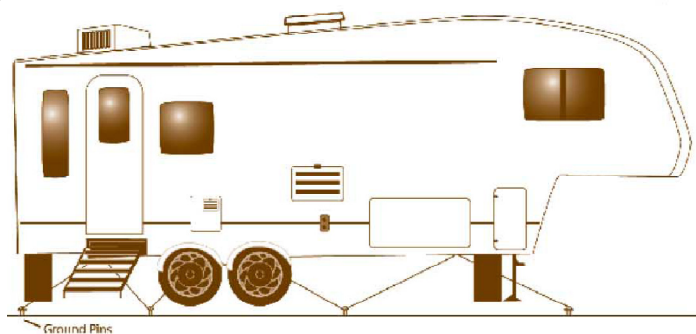


Diagram A

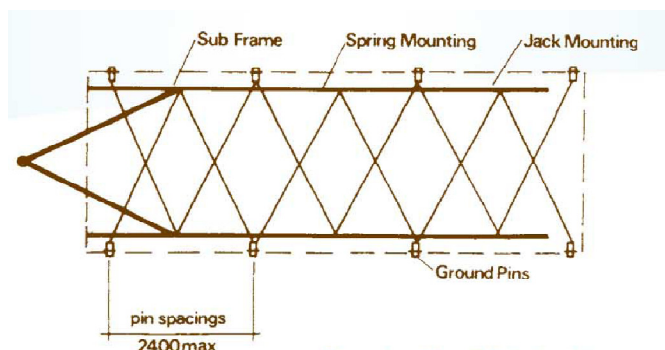


Diagram B



Where suitable ground anchor points have been installed you should use either short lengths of strong chain and turnbuckles or strong rope to secure the chassis to the ground anchor points.

Where suitable ground anchor points have not been installed the suggested tie down is shown in **Diagram A** and **Diagram B**. It comprises a nylon rope or steel cable anchored at ground level and attached to the van chassis.

Ensure that all van supports are stable. The effectiveness of the tie down will be lost if the van supports fail during high winds.

The steel pin type anchor should be angled to the vertical and driven into position. Make enquiries and take care to avoid damaging underground pipes or cables or other facilities when driving steel pins into the ground.

Rope should be tied loosely with secure knots to round pickets and chassis members and then tightened to a 'twanging' tension with 12millimetre diameter 300millimetre long steel rods or timber dowel used as a twitch. Once the rope is tightened, the twitching rod should be tied along the tightened rope with twine to prevent the twitch unwinding. Do not over tighten.

Where rope cannot be passed around a chassis, provide loops made from 8millimetre diameter mild steel rod secured to chassis with a minimum of 50millimetre long x 6millimetre filet weld to each leg of the loop.

Pattern of ropes used for roof tie-down

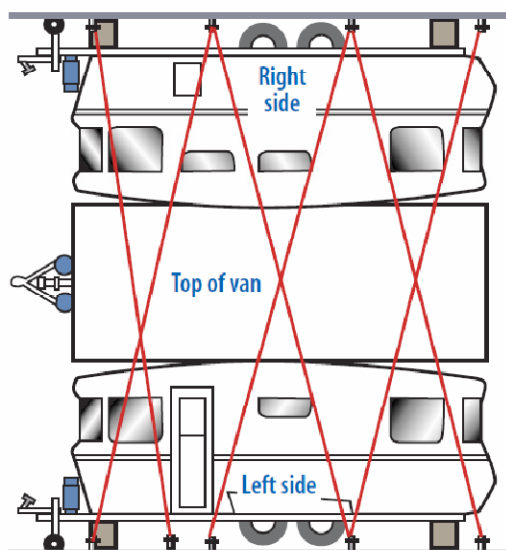


Diagram C

Step 2: Roof tie down

The roof tie down keeps the van from overturning or swaying off its chassis. The roof tie down is best done when a very strong wind warning is forecast.

First remove, roll up and put away your annex.

The most effective way to tie down the roof is to form a strong net shape from ropes tied to ground anchor points and passed over the roof. **Diagram C** shows this.

The rope or cable should be tensioned by hand. Twitching is not required. Do not over tighten.

Tie all caravan roof ropes together with ropes running horizontally at the junction of the caravan roof and side walls, and knotted to each roof rope.

You may want to consider using padding under the corners of the rope to protect your caravan from being scratched or damaged by the rope or cable.

Step 3: Put other items away and prepare the rest of your caravan

Once Step 1 and Step 2 have been completed, make sure you store all of your outdoor equipment inside the van. This includes the annex, awnings, bicycles, toys, chairs, picnic tables, garbage bins and other items.

Heavy or bulky items that cannot be put in the van should be laid on their side, roped together and tied to the ground anchor points with strong rope.

Before you leave your caravan to seek shelter:

- Board or heavily tape caravan windows
- Draw curtains and lock doors
- Turn off the electricity, water supplies and gas at meters or cylinders
- Lower the van jacks to the ground to provide additional stability and tighten all tie downs
- Check the hand brake is on

For further information on how to prepare for storms, contact FESA on **9323 9300** or visit www.fesa.wa.gov.au.

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