



The UK trade body for the tourer, motorhome, caravan holiday home and park home industries  
www.thencc.org.uk



# Correct attachment of breakaway cables

## Braked Trailers (up to 3500kg GVW)

### Where a designated attachment point is provided on the towbar:

**Either:**

a) Pass the cable through the attachment point and clip it back on itself (Fig. 1),

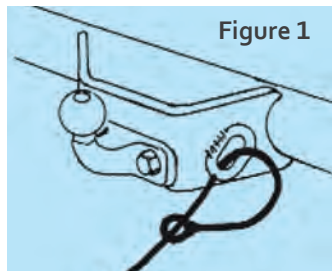


Figure 1

**Or:**

b) Attach the clip directly to the designated point (Fig. 2). This alternative must be specifically permitted by the trailer manufacturer since the clip may not be sufficiently strong for use in this way.

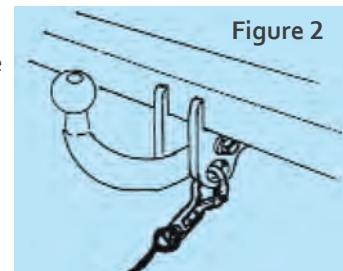


Figure 2

### Where **NO** designated attachment point is provided on the towbar:

**Fixed ball**

Loop the cable around the neck of the towball. If you fit the cable like this, use a single loop only. See Figs. 3A and 3B.

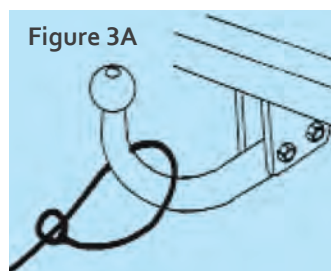


Figure 3A

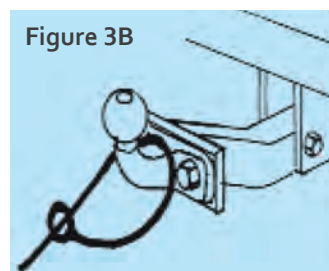


Figure 3B

**Detachable ball**

You must seek guidance on procedure from the towbar manufacturer or supplier.



For other means of attachment and more information see overleaf...


## Other means of attachment:

In some instances it may be possible to attach the cable assembly:

**Either:**

- a) to a permanent part of the towbar structure, as long as this meets the approval of the towbar manufacturer/supplier,

**Or:**

- b) to an accessory sold for the specific purpose of breakaway cable attachment. 

### Correct procedure for use:

- Regularly check the cable and clip for damage.
- Make sure the cable runs as straight as possible and goes through a cable guide underneath the trailer coupling.
- Determine whether or not the towbar has a designated attachment point (i.e. a part specifically designated by its manufacturer for a breakaway cable).

### When the breakaway cable is attached, check to ensure:

- a) that the cable cannot snag in use on the trailer coupling head, jockey wheel, or any accessory e.g. a stabiliser, bumper shield, cycle carrier, etc.
- b) that there is sufficient slack in the cable to allow the towing vehicle and trailer to articulate fully without the cable ever becoming taut and applying the brakes.
- c) that it is not so slack that it can drag on the ground. If left loose, the cable may scrape along the ground and be weakened so that it subsequently fails to do its job. The cable may also be caught on an obstacle when in motion thus engaging the trailer brakes prematurely.

## Replacing breakaway cables

Breakaway cables are not only a legal requirement but also an important safety device on touring caravans and other types of braked trailer up to 3500Kg GVW. The cable must be strong enough to ensure that in the event of an accidental detachment of the trailer the brakes are brought on with sufficient force to stop the trailer. There is some evidence that there are after-market cables available that are not of sufficient specification (tensile strength) to activate the brakes of a caravan. The NCC therefore recommend only replacing breakaway cables with those specifically recommended by the caravan manufacturer. Ensure that servicing teams and caravan owners are advised and aware of the importance of using OEM approved cables and ensure that the accessory department only supplying approved parts.

This advice is supported by:



*The guidance set out in this leaflet is provided for general guidance purposes only and does not purport to be legal advice or a definitive interpretation of the law.*



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## THIS IS THE LAW

UK law requires that all trailers with brakes built on or after 1st October 1982 (e.g. caravans, horse boxes, flat bed car trailers etc.) are fitted with a safety device to provide protection in the unlikely event of the separation of the main coupling while in motion. A device referred to as a "breakaway cable" fulfils this requirement and when fitted to a trailer its use is mandatory.

Trailer and/or towbar manufacturers should supply advice on the correct use of these cables. In the absence of such information, the following guidance should be noted. 

### Purpose of a Breakaway Cable

To apply a trailer's brakes if it becomes separated from its towing vehicle. Having done this, the cable assembly is designed to part, allowing the trailer to come to a halt away from the towing vehicle.

#### Construction

Usually a thin steel cable, possibly plastic coated, and fitted with a means of attachment for connection to the towing vehicle.

#### Operation

In the event of the main coupling of the trailer separating from the towing vehicle, the cable should be able to pull tight, without any hindrance, engaging the trailer's brakes.

**Note: The breakaway cable should never become taut during normal use.**

THIS ADVICE DOES NOT APPLY TO UNBRAKED TRAILERS UP TO 750kg GVW which are required by law to have the use of a SECONDARY COUPLING. A secondary coupling should keep the trailer ATTACHED to its towing vehicle even if its main coupling becomes separated.