



A Buyer's Checklist for Purchasing Vehicle Tie-downs for Wheelchairs

This checklist provides you with advice on the key elements to consider when purchasing Wheelchair Tie-down Systems. Typically, such a system includes the Tie-down, for securing the wheelchair to vehicle, and the Restraint (or seat belts), for securing the person in the wheelchair. The checklist considers both these parts.

One hundred consumers, each with at least three years experience with wheelchair tie-downs provided the advice on the following pages.

When Purchasing a product you may not find the perfect match; however, if you have done your homework, you will know which product is the best match for your needs and lifestyle.

Here are some questions to consider before shopping for a wheelchair tie-down system. If you are not a buyer at this time and work with a van operator/ use rentals, you may want to consider the additional points provided on page 5. Half of the consumers we surveyed use van services, which made it possible to include these points.

What's available?

Do your homework to find out what technology is available. Check products in ABLEDATA (a list of over 20,000 devices). Contact your State Tech Act project for information. Visit your local Independent Living Center and talk to experienced users. Read consumer-oriented magazines (see the "resources" section on the last page).

What am I looking for?

Make a list of what features are most important to you in selecting a wheelchair tie-down system and why. Read the following checklist and ask yourself...is this the right device for me?

Did I consider the details?

Check out the little things before rather than after you buy. For example, will the vendor give you a loaner if your tie-down system needs repair? Is the operating manual difficult to read and understand? The following pages contain many important details.

Where do I get it?

Check out suppliers before you buy. Look for a vendor who listens to you with respect and courtesy, is willing to work with you to find the right product, and who will stand behind the product in the future.

Do I have the best match?

Check your homework from question one, the features most important to you in question two, and the availability of products from your local vendor in question three, to see if you have a match.



Now you are ready to go make a purchase.

REMEMBER...

You are the customer, and you have the right to be treated with every consideration. If you are well-prepared, know about the options available, and have a good idea of what you want, you can more easily develop a good working relationship with the supplier. Above all, you find and choose the product that best matches your needs.

A Buyer's Checklist for Purchasing Wheelchair Tie Downs



The following checklist provides you with advice on the details that have proven to be most important to experienced users of wheelchair tie downs. Take the checklist with you to make sure you consider all of the most important features.

Note: The codes in the last column tell you how to answer each question:

P = examine **P**roduct; *V* = ask the **V**endor; *D* = read the **D**ocumentation in the package-(user manual, warranty, other).

Part A: Check the Tie-down (the part which secures wheelchair to vehicle).

IS IT SAFE?

- Y** **N** Does the tie-down accommodate your chair and secure it safely?P
- Y** **N** Does it come with a mechanism that locks all four wheels to the vehicle floor (so it keeps the chair from shifting while in motion)?P
- Y** **N** Is there a mechanism to stop the vehicle from starting when chair is not secure?P
- Y** **N** Is there an alarm system (sound/light) that lets the driver know when the chair is not properly anchored?P
- Y** **N** Does it have a quick operating emergency release system - a single button release or pull (such as a D-ring on a parachute harness)?P
- Y** **N** Does the emergency release system operate independently of the power that operates the vehicle?P
- Y** **N** Does the emergency release system remain inactive while the vehicle is moving?P
- Y** **N** Does the emergency release system have high visibility (either reflective coated or brightly painted)?P

IS IT RELIABLE?

- Y** **N** Does the tie-down come with attachments so it does NOT attach to wheelchair parts that release (such as footrests and armrests)?P
- Y** **N** Does the manual report an independent testing of the tie-down involving users?.....D

- Y N Does the manual report safety testing on all parts of the tie-down?D
- Y N Does the manual inform you about how well it protects you and your chair (that is, the pressure and weight it can safely withstand)?D
- Y N Does it have a warranty that covers breakage in use?D
- Y N Is there a guarantee for repairs?D
- Y N Does the warranty include parts replacement?D
- Y N Does customer support include a trial period by customer?.....V
- Y N Does customer support include follow-up calls to assess customer satisfaction?V
- Y N Is there customer training at purchase about how to use the tie-down (including emergency release operation)?V

IS IT EFFECTIVE?

- Y N If it is an automatic tie-down system, does it come with a battery back up?P
- Y N Does the documentation provide injury and accident reports?.....D

IS IT AFFORDABLE?

- Y N Does the vendor quote the cost of tie-down and installation?.....V

IS IT EASY TO USE?

- Y N Do the tie-down belts retract automatically when not in use?P
- Y N Is the mechanism (ex: ratchet-type system) that tightens the tie-down and secures it to the floor easy to operate?P
- Y N Can persons with low dexterity operate the tie-down?P
- Y N Is the hook-up and release mechanism easy enough for you to do it yourself?P
- Y N Is the release mechanism quick to operate?P

IS IT EASY TO LEARN/ASSEMBLE?

- Y N Can a user quickly figure out the correct use of the tie-down and the proper way to engage it?.....P/D
- Y N Does the vendor offer visual instructions (diagrams) inside the vehicle as part of customer support?V

IS IT EASY TO MAINTAIN & REPAIR?

- Y N Is there a user manual that clearly shows parts?.....D
- Y N Does the manual contain the basic maintenance and repair instructions?.....D
- Y N Is there a maintenance contract/schedule that provides for an annual inspection (for cuts, fraying, etc.)?D
- Y N Is information provided on storage, and protection from water, salt, etc.?D
- Y N Is information provided on how to check stress points of the tie-down?.....D
- Y N Is there information for the user about how to clean the tie-down?.....D
- Y N Is the user able to repair the tie-down using only standard tools?D
- Y N Is "While-U-Wait" service available for simple repairs (like replacing a belt or buckle)?.....D

Part B: Check the seat belts (that hold passenger in wheelchair).

ARE THEY SAFE AND COMFORTABLE?

- Y N Does the tie-down system come with seat belts for the wheelchair passenger?P
- Y N Do the seat belts (that hold the person in the wheelchair) and the tie-down (that holds the chair in the vehicle) have separate or independent attachments?P
- Y N Does the seat belt have both shoulder harness and lap belt?P
- Y N Is the seat belt adjustable so it fits you snugly and securely?.....P
- Y N Is the seat belt padded at the shoulder?P

- Y N Are the seat belt straps wide enough for you?P
- Y N Is the seat belt designed so the buckle does NOT come in contact with the user?P

Part C: If you are not a buyer at this time, but are using a tie-down system that comes with the vehicle you are renting, make sure you check the following:

- Y N Does the van service make sure they have the appropriate tie-downs for your specific chair?V
- Y N Is the driver trained in the use of the tie-down system in the van?.....V
- Y N Does the driver have hands-on training with different wheelchairs and tie-down systems?V
- Y N Does the driver receive regular refresher training?V
- Y N Does the driver make sure you feel secure?V

Resources

ABLEDATA

ABLEDATA a database of over 20,000 assistive technology devices, including product descriptions, vendor addresses and prices:

ABLEDATA

8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319

Telephone: 800 227-0216,

201 608-8998 (in Maryland)

TDD: 301 608-8912; **Fax:** 310 608-8958

WWW: <http://www.abledata.com/index.htm>

RESNA Technical Assistance Project

Under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, every U.S. State and Territory has a program that provides people with information about what assistive devices exist, and how to acquire them. To find the program in your your State or Territory, contact:

RESNA Technical Assistance Project.

1700 North Moore Street, Suite 1540;
Arlington, VA 22209-1903

Phone: 703 524-6686;

TTY: 703 524-6639; **Fax:** 703 524-6630.

WWW: <http://www.org/resna/reshome.htm>

Independent Living Centers (ILCs)

ILCs are consumer-staffed-and-directed human service agencies assisting individuals to maximize their independence and achieve a satisfying life in the community, regardless of age or type of disability. Over 400 centers across the U.S. provide the core services of peer counseling, independent living skills instruction, information and referral, and advocacy. For your closest ILC, call:

ILRU (Independent Living Research Utilization) Research and Training Center on Independent Living

23 S Shepherd, Suite 1000

Houston, Texas 77019

Telephone: 713-520-0232

TTY: 713-520-5136

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

1916 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 209

Arlington, VA 22201

Telephone: 703-525-3406

TTY: 703-525-4153

Fax: 703-525-3409

E-mail: ncil@tsbbs08.tnet.com

Consumer Magazines

Accent on Living

P.O. box 700

Bloomington, IL 61702-0700

Enable Magazine

3657 Cortez Rd. West

Bradenton, FL 34210

Telephone: 888-4ENABLE

Mainstream Magazine

P.O. Box 370598,

San Diego, CA 92137-0598

Telephone: 619-234-3138

Sports 'n Spokes

5201 North 19th Avenue, Suite 111,

Phoenix, AZ 85015-2994

Telephone: 602-224-0500

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