



# Plow, truck match critical for safety & success

*The move to make trucks ride more like cars puts a spin on the usual truck/plow compatibility equation. Don't just take for granted what a salesman tells you. Know the facts about truck/plow compatibility.*

By JOHN ALLIN

**W**hen it comes to putting plows on trucks, you can get a lot of different opinions from a lot of different people. It can be confusing. I have spent time on the phone with the manufacturers and in dealers showrooms talking with tech support people, sales people, and owners of dealerships.

I have found that one dealer can tell you that there is no problem with putting a plow on the truck they sell, and another

tell you there is no way you should put a plow on that truck. Below is a compilation of what I have been able to find out that I feel to be "reliable" information.

Much of the confusion surrounding this issue can be traced to the addition of the driver's side air bag in trucks, but it can also have a lot to do with the demands of those who purchase trucks. It is a federal law that all trucks under 8600 lbs. gross vehicle weight (GVW) must meet the same safety standards as cars.

This makes automotive engineers very conservative. Also, more than 90 percent of pickups and sport/utilities sold today are sold to car buyers who want a "new car ride" in their trucks as well as the op-

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tions that are available in cars.

Because of this, the stripped down "work truck" has become a thing of the past. Trucks are being designed with a softer ride and are now made closer to the ground so people can get into them easier. Much of this has to do with half-ton trucks and sport utilities, so truck manufacturers now consider sport utilities, half-ton trucks and smaller to be personal use vehicles, not commercial truck vehicles.

Listed below is some feedback I have acquired from the manufacturers about their recommendations regarding mounting plows on their trucks.

**Chevrolet/GMC:** Has approved only 10 models (only two of which are half-ton trucks) for snow work, and all of them must have the VYO snowplow prep package. They want no plows on any sport utility vehicles, no plows on extended cab trucks, crew cab trucks and Suburbans.

**Ford:** When the new F-150LD first came out, they said no plow, but now they seem to have backed off somewhat. It must have a 3900 lb. front axle, the plow cannot exceed 500 lbs. and the truck must have the Heavy Duty Service Package.

On the F-250LD, they only approve a



## APPROXIMATE WEIGHTS FOR STANDARD SIZE PLOWS:

6-1/2' light duty plows	450 lbs.
6-1/2' standard duty plows	650 lbs.
7-1/2' standard duty plows	665 lbs. Boss
7-1/2' super duty plows	715 lbs. Boss
7-1/2' poly plows	625 lbs. Western
7-1/2' power "V" plows	795 lbs. Boss
8' standard duty plows	775 lbs. Western
8' super duty plows	765 lbs. Boss
8' poly plows	825 lbs. Western
8'2" power "V" plows	910 lbs. Boss
8-1/2' standard duty plows	790 lbs. Boss
9' standard duty plows	825 lbs. Western
9' super duty plows	813 lbs. Boss
9'2" power "V" plows	960 lbs. Boss

plow for a 3950 lb. front axle. They do not approve of plows on any sport utility vehicle.

**Dodge:** Only trucks with gas engines are approved for plow mounting. And these must have AHD plow packages. No half-ton trucks or Dakotas are approved.

**Toyota:** They say no plows are approved on any trucks.

As you can easily see, the manufacturers are saying that if you want a plow, get a three-quarter ton truck or larger.

The manufacturers' reasoning on smaller trucks is this (and it is technical): if a pickup is designed to carry three passengers, then three, 150-lb. people must be figured into the equation to see if the front axle is overloaded. And over-load-

ing is a problem not to be taken lightly, because it can effect wear and federal safety standards in braking.

If you have a four-passenger sport utility vehicle (or extended cab) or even a six-passenger Suburban (or crew cab) the problem is worse.

But what if you plow alone? Or possibly with only your dog for company? This is not considered. It is a technicality. But there is another point that they have not added to the equation. That is "rear ballast." The more weight within limits that is added to the rear axle subtracts weight added to the front axle by adding a plow.

Finally, there is one more thing that has not been addressed at all by the manufacturers. This is the fact that Western has come up with an innovative addition to their plow frames. Western has added a wheel to ride under the plow frame that allows the plow to support its own weight.

The question arises: What can happen if you put a plow on an unapproved truck. Answer: the front end and front suspension will not be under warranty. The brakes may also wear prematurely. There may be some safety concerns here too. There are dealers that will install plows on almost any vehicle out there in the marketplace.

Keep in mind that my personal opinion is that you should use a three-quarter ton (or larger) truck for all snow plowing operations. □

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**Top left: Chevy extended cab truck is not to be used for snow plowing. Ford truck, at right, must have a 3900 lb. front axle.**

