



# SAFETY IN STAKEBEDS

Holy CRAP... I'd forgotten all about Joe's giant pencil!!!

Sure, I'd ducked to avoid the limb hanging out over the road, but I'd also neglected to toss a couple of bungee straps across his tremendous Ticonderoga before we pulled out of basecamp and now an 8-foot long yellow #2 pencil was sailing over my head, out into the road behind me, directly toward a little old lady in a champagne Toyota Camry with two-tone suede seats.

She had the craziest expression on her face.

It was just the sort of expression that says "Oh Lordy mercy, why is there a giant yellow #2 pencil flying through the air at my champagne Toyota Camry with two-tone suede seats??!"

In that frozen moment I realized that the little old lady was entirely unlikely to be impressed that Joe had purchased the large PVC pipe and painted it to look like a giant pencil (with pink eraser) as a commentary on how wretchedly ineffective our 2nd-unit painter was at "erasing" the tire marks the stunt guys kept leaving all over the highway.

All this lady knew was that we had preemptively launched an enormous pencil toward her car in direct violation of the First Law of Stakebeds : *Strap It Down!*

Stakebeds are the pack mules of the motion picture industry, and while even the clumsiest newbie can learn to roll a cart from the nice big tailgate of a working truck onto the back of a stakebed, it takes a lot more experience and dexterity to navigate



the stakebed's ridiculously narrow lift gate when moving things down to ground level.  
Second Law of Stakebeds : *Don't Lift Alone*

**"DESPITE WHAT PEOPLE MAY TELL YOU, IT'S A FOOL'S  
ERRAND TO ATTEMPT TO OPERATE A STAKEBED'S LIFT GATE  
BY YOURSELF BECAUSE THERE ARE TREMENDOUS ODDS THAT  
SOMETHING WILL GO HORRIBLY, HORRIBLY WRONG."**

In my own greenhorn days I sent my boss' favorite cart into a triple ju-ju-flop off the end of a tailgate, watching in horror as it smashed into the asphalt below. Fortunately, only one other person saw me make this mistake.

Unfortunately, that person was my boss. Please don't allow my cautionary tales to deter you from the joys that can be found in stakebeds. For instance, there is a certain degree of celebrity which film crews enjoy as they ride through the streets of a city in the back of a stakebed truck. Children wave and old people cheer, grown men look on with open envy and the womenfolk watch with profound desire... at least that's the theory being bandied about in the grip department.

I recall a romantically rainy, near-freezing, late fall stakebed ride across a darkened meadow as I tried to make time with a sexy on-set costumer. As I desperately wrestled a cart filled with directors chairs with my left hand and a unsecured rubbermaid cart filled with footballs with my right hand, the stakebed lurched across the tops of the