

PRODUCT EVALUATION

KNOWLEDGE OF hitch weight (trailer tongue weight) is an important part of putting together a safe, stable tow rig and trailer combination. The proper proportion between hitch weight and gross weight can help prevent trailer sway and/or overloading of the hitch and other components.

Due to widely varying load conditions, you can't rely on the manufacturer's brochure figures if you're looking for accurate tongue weight. Learning the true weight requires a trip to a public scale, or use of a portable beam-type commercial scale or a bathroom scale, provided you understand the mathematical leverage factors involved.

Enter the Load Master, an inexpensive trailer-tongue scale manufactured by Sherline Products. Sherline is a company that's experienced in the design and manufacture of precision tools, and the company's heritage shows in the way the Load Master is assembled. All component parts are beautifully machined and finished.

The scale couldn't be much simpler. Not counting the readout



gauge, it has just one moving part—the piston, with an O-ring seal, which slides into a solid aluminum body with an anodized finish. In essence, the scale converts the tongue weight on the piston, which places the hydraulic fluid in the scale under pressure into a reading on the pressure gauge, which translates the fluid's pounds per square inch

(psi) into pounds of tongue weight. The 0- to 1000-psi

gauge, for example, reads as 0 to 1000 pounds of weight.

Three weight ranges from which to choose include 0 to 1000, 0 to 2000, and 0 to 3000 pounds. The heavier ranges would be most useful for those who need to measure fifth-wheel trailer tongues.

In operation, the Load Master, with its removable center post installed, is securely supported and placed under the hitch ball to provide the most accurate weight readout. For all practical purposes, it can also be placed under the tongue jack, which, while not directly under the hitch, provides a figure that's close enough for average trailer setup. It's also possible to unscrew the center post from the scale and place the trailer-

LOAD MASTER SCALE

Measuring hitch weight

is easy with this

accurate device



LOAD MASTER SCALE

tongue wheel in the bowl-shape top of the unit.

To check the Load Master's accuracy, we weighed a small trailer's tongue, and the scale reading was just shy of 300 pounds. Using an accurate sliding-beam scale for comparison, the tongue weighed 285 pounds. All things considered, that's acceptably accurate.

The Load Master owner's manual includes 10 pages of trailer-loading, tongue-weight and towing theory before it gets into use of the product. In that respect, it's a valuable resource than can answer a lot of questions relating to the whys and wherefores of trailer-tongue loads and towing stability.

Load Master has a suggested retail price of \$110 and comes with a one-year limited warranty against defects in

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materials and workmanship. This device might be a nifty item for an RV dealership or an RV owner club's tool kitty. Most users only need to weigh a trailer tongue once or twice while setting up a towing combination, after which there is no need for another weight reading until a different trailer is in the works. Of course, trailerists who regularly alter the load in a given trailer might also find the Load Master handy for an occasional check to make sure they're still in the 11 percent-or-more tongue-weight ballpark. **TL**

—JEFF JOHNSTON

Sherline Products Incorporated, Department TL, 170 Navajo Street, San Marcos, California 92069-2593; (800) 541-0735 or (619) 744-3674. **CIRCLE 215 ON READER SERVICE CARD.**



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