

Tip of the Month: Recovery/Traction Boards

I have learnt a number of things about recovery or traction boards (the Australian made MaxTrax were the original ones):

1. They are very versatile and useful. For example:
 - Recovery of a vehicle bogged in mud or sand.
 - Making a ramp to stop wheels going into holes to prevent losing traction.
 - Breaking the bead on a tyre to assist removing a tyre from a rim.
 - Levelling your vehicle, camper etc when making camp.
 - Building a bridge across ditches etc (boards can be layered to provide sufficient strength).
 - Creating two wheel tracks across very soft ground by laying rows of multiple boards.
 - Using as a base plate to prevent a jack sinking in soft ground.
 - Using as a shovel to remove sand from around wheels.
2. The more I use them the more I like them – but they have to be used correctly.
3. They are one of the safest means of vehicle recovery because using snatch straps and winch cables under extreme tension is potentially dangerous.
4. Using boards for vehicle recovery does not rely on a second vehicle or a handy tree as a recovery point i.e. you can self-recover from a bog (maybe).
5. Four boards are better than 2. If you have 2 boards and then purchase 2 more, ensure that they will stack together neatly.
6. Buy good quality ones (preferably Australian made). You get what you pay for.
7. Brightly coloured boards (e.g. orange, yellow) are easier to find when buried in mud or sand.
8. Attach a strap to the side of the board to make it easier to find and retrieve them from mud.
9. When using them to recover a bogged vehicle, try to get the front edge of the board under the tyre if possible. Drive gently to roll onto the board. DO NOT spin the wheels on the board (it will melt/damage the board).
10. If you have to snatch or winch a stuck vehicle, you may be able to use recovery boards to reduce the recovery load.
11. Worn out knobs on the tread section may be able to be repaired using short bolts.
12. Longer boards are better than short ones but also think about how you are going to carry them.
13. Store them where they are readily accessible if you do become bogged.
14. If you want to keep the boards on the roof rack permanently, have them in a vinyl or canvas bag to prevent UV light degrading them and making them brittle over time. You may want to lock them on to prevent theft.
15. If you want to store them in your vehicle, a canvas or vinyl bag is recommended to keep your vehicle clean (the boards will get very muddy).
16. If possible, clean mud off boards before it dries on hard.
17. You need to practice using them for vehicle recovery.

I am sure there is a lot more to learn. What can you add? **John Kent, Training Officer.**