



TOWABLES FOR 2003



Hummer H2



Infiniti G35 Sport Coupe



Acura MDX



Saturn L-Series Wagon



GMC Sierra

A guide to 2003-model vehicles that manufacturers have indicated can be recreationally towed four wheels down behind motorhomes without significant modifications.

The following information is intended to help motorhome owners select a vehicle that is approved by its manufacturer for flat towing. The information was gathered from automobile manufacturers and owners manuals and pertains only to model-year 2003 vehicles. The information may or may not be correct for earlier or later models. While every attempt has been made to present accurate information, keep in mind that continued vehicle improvements and production-line changes could alter the information and render it out of date.

You win some; you lose some. That seems to be a good summary of what happened with this year's list of vehicles that manufacturers have indicated can be towed four wheels down without significant modifications. The 2003 list includes several new models, but also a few noticeable absences from previous surveys. Nevertheless, motorhomers searching for a new towed vehicle still have more than 100 models from which to choose.

For the first time, the Mercedes-Benz name is included on the list, featuring C-Class and SLK-Class models equipped with manual transmissions. Several new four-wheel-drive vehicles make their debut on this year's list: the Hummer H2, a heavily advertised and pricey smaller version of the full-sized H1; Subaru's smallish pickup truck, the Baja; and the Isuzu Ascender. Other additions include Nissan's revival of the sporty Z car; the Ford Mustang; Dodge's heavy-duty 2500 and 3500 pickups; Suzuki's Aerio and XL-7 models; and Infiniti's G35 Sport Coupe, which replaces the G20.

Joining the CR-V in Honda's towable lineup for 2003 are two new offerings: the uniquely designed Element and the Pilot midsize SUV. The Acura MDX also remains on the list.

Owners manuals for other Honda vehicles still advise against towing at more than 35 mph or for more than 50 miles. However, Honda officials note that this recommendation exists primarily because the company has not conducted formal towing tests of its cars at higher speeds or for greater distances. Honda officials have indicated that they are not aware of any problems caused by towing a Honda automobile with either manual or automatic transmission, as long as proper towing preparations are made and the vehicle is towed at legal highway speeds. Instructions for towing are available in the Owner Line section of Honda's Web site — www.honda.com — and should be available from a Honda dealer or by calling Honda customer service at (800) 999-1009.

Saturn, one of the most popular towed vehicles among FMCA members, discontinued the original S-Series cars for 2003 and introduced the ION. Only IONs equipped with the five-speed manual transmission can be towed; those with the variable-speed automatic transmission cannot. The VUE, Saturn's second-year SUV, also is towable only when equipped with a manual transmission. L-Series Saturns still use

continued



Oldsmobile Alero



Chrysler PT Turbo



Isuzu Ascender



Jeep Liberty



Land Rover Discovery

the Hydra-Matic 4T40-E automatic transmission and are approved for flat towing, as are those equipped with manual transmissions.

Last year General Motors announced that it was retiring its venerable Oldsmobile division. While the production of several Olds vehicles ceased in 2002, the Alero was not one of them. Since that model is not slated to end until after the 2004 model year, it's still on the towable list.

The most substantial loss this year occurred when Mitsubishi decided that it will no longer approve any of its vehicles for flat towing, eliminating nine models from the list. The Mercury Mountaineer and the Kia Sportage also were removed, along with all Volvo models, which actually were stricken from last year's list shortly after it was published.

Surveys indicate that nearly 90 percent of FMCA members tow a vehicle behind their motorhome. While some members use a trailer or a tow dolly, most choose to flat tow; that is, the towed vehicle is connected to the motorhome with a tow bar and has all four wheels on the ground.

Before purchasing or towing a vehicle, find out from the dealer, manufacturer, and/or the owners manual how towing will affect the vehicle's warranty. Also, keep in mind that while a manufacturer may say a certain vehicle can be towed without significant modifications, what is "not significant" to one person may be burdensome to another.

Before you make your purchase, consult the vehicle owners manual for specific towing procedures, such as ignition lock position, accessories, possible towing restrictions or limitations, and other items of concern. This information often is listed in the owners manual under a heading such as "Recreational Towing." You also might ask the dealer representative whether any service bulletins have been released that relate to towing the vehicle behind a motorhome. Make sure the person with whom you are speaking realizes you are talking about *towing* the vehicle and not using it *to tow* a trailer. Also, when consulting the owners manual, do not confuse recreational towing with emergency towing. Some vehicles can be towed four wheels down for emergency purposes only.

Before purchasing a towed vehicle, weigh it if possible. The following list includes the approximate curb weights as supplied by the manufacturers; however, optional equipment and accessories can increase the weight of the vehicle. It is also a good idea to weigh your motorhome (see "Understanding RV Weights," page 78, April 2000). Because of overloading issues, some motorhomes should not tow anything. In fact, certain motorhomes may need to have their loads lightened before being driven solo.

You should also consult your motorhome's owners manual for requirements and information regarding the use of auxiliary braking systems on the towed vehicle. Some chassis, motorhome, and automobile manufacturers recommend that supplemental brakes be used on any towed vehicle. Not all jurisdictions mandate brakes on towed vehicles, but the laws of physics always apply. Few drivers would consider towing a load of bricks on a trailer that was not equipped with brakes, but some people tow a 3,000-pound vehicle without supplemental brakes. Of course, the brakes on the motorhome cannot tell the difference between 3,000 pounds of bricks and 3,000 pounds of vehicle. Most of us have never heard a driver say the brakes on a motorhome stop it *too* quickly. Nevertheless, many of us have seen what happens when brakes don't work quickly enough.

The most important issue we face as we operate our motor coaches is safety. That means the initial installation of the towing equipment should be done by knowledgeable, qualified, and experienced personnel. After installation, it's imperative that all equipment be checked frequently and used only in the manner for which it was designed.

As with other mechanical gear, proper maintenance can increase the lifetime of towing equipment. However, there comes a time when the equipment must be replaced to prevent a dangerous situation. Frequent inspections will alert you to the need.

When hooking up the towed vehicle, do not let yourself be distracted. We've all heard stories of someone who had a weld break or who forgot to connect safety chains but was fortunate enough that nothing bad happened. Others were not so lucky, and they know that the personal and financial costs of a towing mishap can be enormous.

There is no single best way or best vehicle to tow. Each vehicle and method has advantages and disadvantages. If a vehicle you already own or wish to purchase cannot be flat towed, trailer towing is an option, and it may be possible to tow it on a dolly or have adaptations made to the vehicle to render it towable.

ACURA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
MDX	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	65/None	4,420

CHEVROLET

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Avalanche	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,678
*Blazer 2-door	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	3,848
Cavalier	■	■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,617
Malibu	■	N/A	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,106
Silverado 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	4,439
Suburban 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,123
Tahoe 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,050
Tracker 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	50/200	2,811
TrailBlazer 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	4,616

**Only the two-door Blazer can be flat towed; the four-door cannot.*



Chevrolet TrailBlazer

CHRYSLER

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
PT Cruiser		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,121
PT Turbo		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,314
Sebring Coupe LX		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,064
Sebring Coupe LXi		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,206

DODGE

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Dakota 4x4		■	Four-wheel drive	None	3,909
Durango 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	4,629
Neon SE/SXT/RT		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,566
Ram 1500 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	4,836
Ram 2500 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	5,760
Ram 3500 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	6,332
SRT-4		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,939
Stratus Coupe SE		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,064
Stratus Coupe RT		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,206



Dodge Neon

FORD



Ford Escape

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Escape 4x2	■		Front-wheel drive	None	3,019
Escape 4x4	■		Four-wheel drive	None	3,175
*Explorer 4-door 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	4,449
Explorer Sport 4x2	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,898
**Explorer Sport 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	4,088
Explorer Sport Trac 4x2	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	4,139
**Explorer Sport Trac 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	4,352
***F-150 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	4,345
****F-250/350 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	5,837
Focus	■		Front-wheel drive	None	2,586
Mustang	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,066
Ranger 4x2	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,002
Ranger 4x4	■		Four-wheel drive	None	3,443
ZX2	■		Front-wheel drive	None	2,478

*With dealer-installed Neutral Tow Kit (part #1L2J7H332-AA).

**Models with automatic transmissions require dealer-installed Neutral Tow Kit (part #3L2J7H332-AA).

***Manual transfer case only (not electronic shift-on-the-fly 4x4). Requires that the center disconnect be locked out by capping off one of the front axle vacuum motor lines.

****Manual transfer case only (not electronic shift-on-the-fly 4x4).

GMC

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Envoy 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	4,616
Envoy XL 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	4,968
Sierra 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	4,439
Yukon 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,269
Yukon XL 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,567

HONDA



Honda Element

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
CR-V 4x2 LX	■	N/A	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,201
CR-V 4x4 LX, EX	■	■	Four-wheel drive	65/None	3,258
Element 4x2 DX, EX	■	■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,330
Element 4x4 DX, EX	■	■	Four-wheel drive	65/None	3,518
Pilot LX, EX	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	65/None	4,416

HUMMER

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
H2	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	6,400

HYUNDAI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Accent	■		Front-wheel drive	None	2,255
Elantra	■		Front-wheel drive	None	2,635
Santa Fe 4x2	■		Front-wheel drive	None	3,494
Tiburon	■		Front-wheel drive	None	2,940
Tiburon GT	■		Front-wheel drive	None	3,015



Hyundai Elantra

INFINITI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
G35 Sport Coupe		■	Rear-wheel drive	60/500*	3,435

*After towing 500 miles, idle the engine in "neutral" for several minutes to circulate fluids.

ISUZU

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Ascender	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	55/None	4,967

JEEP

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Grand Cherokee 4x4	■	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	4,010
Liberty 4x4	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	3,826
Wrangler	■	■	Four-wheel drive	None	3,235

LAND ROVER

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Discovery	■	N/A	Permanent 4WD	None	4,576
Range Rover	■	N/A	Permanent 4WD	50 mph/6 hours	5,379

MAZDA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Truck 4x2		■	Rear-wheel drive	55/None	2,960
Truck 4x4		■	Four-wheel drive	55/None	3,380
Tribute DX 4x2		■	Front-wheel drive	55/None	3,091
Tribute DX 4x4		■	Four-wheel drive	55/None	3,245



Mazda Tribute

Right:
Mercedes-Benz
C320 Sedan;
far right:
Pontiac Sunfire



MERCEDES-BENZ

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
C230 Kompressor Sport Coupe	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,250
C240 Sedan/Wagon	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,310
C320 Sedan/Wagon	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,430
SLK 230 Kompressor Roadster	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,055
SLK 320 Roadster	■		Rear-wheel drive	None	3,099

NISSAN



Nissan 350Z

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
350Z	■		Rear-wheel drive	60/500*	3,188
Frontier Crew Cab XE 4x2	■		Rear-wheel drive	60/500*	3,821
Frontier Crew Cab XE 4x4	■		Four-wheel drive	60/500*	4,093
Xterra I4 XE 4x2	N/A	■	Rear-wheel drive	60/500*	3,589
Xterra XE/SE 4x2		■	Rear-wheel drive	60/500*	3,760
Xterra XE/SE 4x4		■	Four-wheel drive	60/500*	4,046

*All Nissan vehicles: After towing 500 miles, idle the engine in "neutral" for several minutes to circulate fluids.

OLDSMOBILE

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Alero Coupe/Sedan	■	■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,946

PONTIAC

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Grand Am SE Sedan	■	■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,116
Grand Am GT Coupe/Sedan	■	N/A	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,099
Sunfire	■	■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,606
Vibe (with 5-speed manual)		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,701

SATURN

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
ION Coupe/Sedan		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,692
L-Series Sedan/Wagon	■	■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,988
VUE		■	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,179

SUBARU

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Baja		■	All-wheel drive	None	3,485
Forester 2.5 X/XS/XS Premium		■	All-wheel drive	None	3,090
Impreza 2.5 RS Sedan/TS Wagon		■	All-wheel drive	None	2,965
Impreza WRX Sedan/Sport Wagon		■	All-wheel drive	None	3,085
Outback Wagon/Limited		■	All-wheel drive	None	3,430
Outback Sport		■	All-wheel drive	None	3,050



Subaru Baja

SUZUKI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Aerio Sedan S/GS		■	Front-wheel drive	55/200*	2,641
Aerio SX		■	Front-wheel drive	55/200*	2,630
Grand Vitara	■	■	Four-wheel drive	55/200*	3,163
Vitara 2-door	■	■	Four-wheel drive	55/200*	2,800
Vitara 4-door	■	■	Four-wheel drive	55/200*	2,976
XL-7	■	■	Four-wheel drive	55/200*	3,638

*Stop towing after 200 miles and follow the manufacturer's instructions to circulate the oil in the transfer case and/or transmission.



Suzuki XL-7

TOYOTA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lbs.)
	Auto	Manual			
Camry		■	Front-wheel drive	None	3,086
Camry Solara (including convertible)		■	Front-wheel drive	None	3,075
Celica		■	Front-wheel drive	None	2,425
Corolla		■	Front-wheel drive	None	2,502
Echo		■	Front-wheel drive	None	2,055
Matrix 4x2		■	Front-wheel drive	None	2,679
MR2 Spyder	N/A	■	Rear-wheel drive	None	2,195
RAV4 2WD		■	Front-wheel drive	None	2,711



Toyota Matrix