

Headache Racks

Information on Cab Guard Utility for School Entities

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A headache rack, also known as a truck back rack or cab guard, is a pickup truck accessory that is attached to the truck bed just behind the rear cab window. Headache racks were originally intended to prevent damage to the rear window of trucks when hauling cargo. By protecting the rear window from shifting cargo, they also help to protect the driver and passengers in the truck's cab. Headache racks have a design for safety, shielding the rear window and cab of the truck with metal bars and/or a metal mesh, they help to stop materials and tools from breaking through the back window. Certain headache racks have been shown to add additional protection in the event of a rollover, as well as other benefits such as offering extra lighting attachments, preventing rear window break-ins and hauling ladders and equipment. According to many headache rack manufacturers and retailers across the nation, safety of the driver and passengers remains the number one reason vehicle owners purchase this truck accessory.

In February 2020 a grounds technician employed with a Colorado school district was plowing snow in the early morning hours. The plow truck in use was hauling a salt-sand spreading machine in the truck bed. While commuting from one school campus to another on a public road, the

grounds technician hit an ice patch and proceeded to slide off the road, dropping off a steep embankment into a drainage culvert. It was reported the right side of the truck struck the opposite embankment of the culvert and the truck came to rest on its wheels. The Colorado State Patrol reported that part of the salt-spreading machine installed in the truck bed broke loose from the impact of the crash and struck the grounds technician, who was taken to a nearby hospital. The grounds technician unfortunately did not recover. The school district's plow truck was not equipped with a headache rack.

There are no laws and/or regulations requiring the use of headache racks on trucks. While there is no significant data from studies pertaining to the safety performance of headache racks, the installation of headache rack, on necessary vehicles may be a best practice for the safety of your employees and would be a business and budget decision for you to evaluate. The installation of a headache rack on such vehicles could add an additional layer of safety for the occupants of the vehicle. When considering the purchase of a headache rack we recommend that interested parties research the product prior to purchase to ensure proper vehicle fit and installation.