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Roadside inspections: Be prepared and know what to expect

Over three million roadside inspections are conducted in the United States each year.

About one in every five vehicles and one in twenty drivers that undergo a roadside inspection are placed out of service. If you are a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver, you need to be prepared.

What is a roadside inspection?

A roadside inspection is an examination of you and your CMV by law enforcement. This examination determines if you and your vehicle are in compliance with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations and/or the Hazardous Materials Regulations.

The law enforcement officers who conduct these inspections are trained and follow the specific inspection procedures.

If during an inspection, the inspector discovers serious violations, then you and/or your vehicle is issued an out-of-service order. These violations must be corrected before you or your vehicle can return to service.

There are six types of inspections that are conducted.

1. Full driver and vehicle inspection

— This inspection is the most common of the roadside inspections with about one million conducted in the United States each year. It takes about 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

The inspection starts with the inspector greeting you and identifying himself/herself. The inspector then explains the inspection procedure, chocks the

vehicle, and asks you to turn off the vehicle engine.

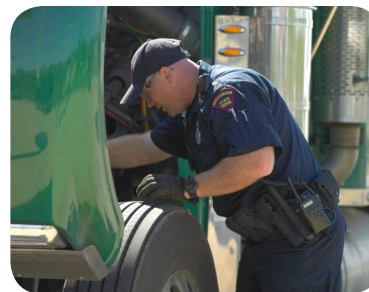
The inspector observes your general condition and checks for safety belt usage. He/she checks the visible areas of the cab for

the possible illegal presence of alcohol, drugs, weapons, or other contraband.

Driver inspection. The inspector conducts a basic interview and may ask you several questions including where you started the trip, where you are going, and whether you have already been inspected while on this trip.

The inspector asks for and examines driver-specific documents including the driver's license, medical certificate (officers will ask

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Roadside inspections: Be prepared and know what to expect *(continued from page 1)*

commercial driver license (CDL) drivers for the motor vehicle record (MVR) instead of a medical card), and log book (including supporting documents).

The inspector also asks for periodic inspection documentation and checks the vehicle for hazardous materials.

The inspector also needs to accurately identify the motor carrier. As well as looking at the information printed on the vehicle's door, he/she may ask to see additional documents including vehicle registration, lease agreement, or shipping papers.

Vehicle inspection. The vehicle part of the inspection is next. The inspector explains the process and describes the hand signals he/she will use.

The inspection begins at the front of the vehicle, proceeds down the driver's side of the vehicle, around the back and up the right side. The inspector goes under the vehicle to inspect certain components.

Inspection report. At the completion of the inspection, the inspector gives the inspection report to you and explains any violations that he/she noted.

You must turn this form in to the motor carrier when you arrive at the company facility the next day. If you are not going to be at a company facility within the next 24 hours, the report must be mailed to the company.

The company needs to repair any out-of-service defects before the vehicle can be operated again, all others must be repaired as part of the next driver vehicle inspection report (DVIR) cycle. The company must then return the form to the state involved within 15 days attesting to the repairs.

Inspection decal. If the vehicle passes the complete vehicle inspection, a decal is placed on the vehicle. "Pass inspection" means that no violations were found among the items listed in the inspection procedures.

The decal, which is placed on the vehicle by the inspector, is valid for up to three months.

Generally, vehicles that display a valid decal are not subject to reinspection unless a problem is observed.

Out-of-service order. If one or more violations or defects are found and the

defects are so unsafe that they must be corrected before operations can resume, you and/or your vehicle is placed out-of-service. The inspector issues an out-of-service order, and tells you what needs to be corrected or done before you or the vehicle can return to service.

The consequences can be severe if you violate an out-of-service order. If convicted of violating an out-of-service order, you can be disqualified from operating a commercial motor vehicle and potentially subject to a fine.

2. Full driver and vehicle walkaround — This inspection is similar to the full driver and vehicle inspection, but takes less time to complete. The driver portion of the inspection is the same as the full driver and vehicle inspection.

The vehicle portion of the inspection covers the same vehicle parts and accessories as the full driver and vehicle inspection, but the inspector does not go under the vehicle.

3. Driver-only — Only driver-specific and hazardous materials documents are inspected.

4. Special project — A one-time examination of a particular item falls into this category. This type of inspection is normally done in support of a study or to refute a suspected trend.

5. Vehicle-only — This inspection follows the vehicle portion of a full driver and vehicle inspection. It is usually conducted during a compliance review at a motor carrier.

Vehicles that pass a vehicle-only inspection are also issued the decal that is issued to vehicles that pass the full driver and vehicle inspection.

6. Radioactive — This inspection is used for select shipments of radioactive material.

Keys to a successful inspection

Preparation and professional behavior are important factors when it comes to successfully completing a roadside inspection. Make sure:

- Your vehicle is neat, clean, and well maintained. A poorly maintained vehicle can draw the attention of an inspector.
- All paperwork (license, log book, medical card) is complete and up to date.
- All inspector questions dealing with basic information are answered respectfully and honestly. Poor manners can draw the attention of an inspector.



Safety focus: Trip planning and time management

Trip planning involves figuring out how to get from point A to point B safely, legally, and **on time** before getting behind the wheel of your vehicle.

Your involvement in trip planning may vary depending on your company. If you work for a company that runs established routes, you may have very little involvement in trip planning. On the other hand if you work for an irregular route carrier, you may be required to plan trips.



When planning a trip, you must consider several factors, including:

- **Your abilities and limitations.** You must have proper rest before starting out, have a reasonable amount of time to complete the trip, and follow the hours-of-service regulations. Be sure to allot time for food, fuel, and rest stops.
- **The vehicle.** The number of trailers, number of axles required for gross weight, and overall weight and length restrictions need to be looked at. Clearance and weight restrictions could be a factor in planning the trip.
- **The load (cargo).** The type of cargo being hauled, its weight, and its center of gravity must be considered. Traffic laws and regulations in certain communities may play a part in planning the route.
- **The road conditions.** Weather and traffic conditions must be taken into account. Remember, traveling in the northern U.S. or in mountainous areas in the winter may require extra time. It's also a good idea to try to schedule rest stops during rush hours in heavy traffic areas.

In addition, you may need to look at any security-related variables that affect routes.

Managing your time

Scheduling enough time to safely make the trip, remaining patient, and staying calm will help make trips successful.

Depending on your job responsibilities, the following can help you manage one of your most precious commodities — time.

Set priorities. Make a list. Evaluate the importance of each task you perform. Is the task critical to you, your job,

and/or your company? Place the most critical tasks at the top of your list (e.g., deliveries, filling out logs and pre- and post-trip inspections). Those tasks that are of less importance or are not time sensitive can be placed closer to the bottom of the list (e.g., refresher training).

Stay organized. Though easier said than done in many cases, being organized can increase productivity. Keep your cab neat and free of unnecessary items. Store logs and other paperwork in an easy to access area such as the pocket of your door.

Use email or text messages. Unlike the immediacy of a phone call, email and texts allow you to investigate an issue and respond when you have time. A thorough response can also eliminate the need for any follow-up emails or phone calls. Of course, never read or respond to a message while driving.

Be careful when it comes to the use of email and texts. We live in a world of immediacy, and the temptation to read and respond to all incoming messages as received can derail your best intentions when it comes to time management.



Set a block of time aside to read and respond to noncritical messages a couple of times each day. Unless you need to do further investigation or consult with someone before responding, read and then respond. Putting off the simple response causes you to open and read the message twice.

Stick to your schedule. Assign reasonable time limits to as many tasks as possible. This includes meal and break times.

Fill your "free time." When there is a "lull" in activity, use that time to take care of some of your low-priority or non-time-sensitive tasks such as brushing up on rules or learning a new skill.

Limit "chat" time. Though good for maintaining positive working relationships, use good judgment when talking with coworkers at your company's facility or with others during stops. Be sure to keep your delivery times in mind.

Reduce stress. Refresh yourself by taking the occasional break. During a rest stop, if possible, take a short walk, stretch, or try deep breathing exercises to help you relax and feel refreshed.



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Exercise: Find the right activity for you

*"Reading is
to the mind
what exercise
is to the body."*

Joseph Addison
Writer
1672 - 1719



**Being active can
be inexpensive,
enjoyable, and
obtainable.**

Physical activity doesn't have to mean joining a gym or walking on a treadmill. To find an exercise routine that you can stick with, find an enjoyable activity that fits into your lifestyle.

When looking for activities, consider:

- Do you prefer exercising alone, with a friend, or in a group? If you're self-motivated, solo exercises such as swimming might be for you. Running can be done alone or with a friend. Fitness classes and team sports are great ways to add a social component to exercise. For variety, try a mixture of options.
- What types of activities are best suited to your lifestyle? Consider your amount of free time, physical abilities, and budget. Walking is one of the most inexpensive exercise options – a good pair of shoes is all that's needed.
- What activities did you enjoy as a child? Basketball, biking, or swimming may be activities you can take up again.



- Do you prefer being indoors or outside? Hiking and biking are great options for those who love the outdoors. Gyms offer exercise equipment options and numerous classes for those who prefer indoor activity.
- What time of day is best? A morning person might want to get up 30 minutes earlier than usual to exercise, while a night owl might prefer to stop at the gym right after work.
- How about making it a family affair? Walking the dog, taking a bike ride as a family, tossing a ball with the kids, or playing an active video game are a few ways to incorporate activity into your day.
- What are your health and fitness goals? Are you trying to lose weight or lower your cholesterol? Talk to your doctor or a health coach to determine the best way to meet your goals.

