

# BUMPER 2 BUMPER

## VEHICLE INSPECTIONS



A GUIDE CREATED BY:  
TBS FACTORING  
SERVICE

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### ...CREATED BY TBS FACTORING SERVICE

[TBS Factoring Service, LLC](#) is a leading provider of freight-bill factoring to growth-oriented companies in the transportation industry. Founded in 2004, the Oklahoma City-based company currently serves more than 1,600 clients nationwide with simple and flexible cash-flow solutions.

TBS Factoring is a key part of a family owned, one-stop shop for independent trucking services that also includes [Truckers Bookkeeping Service](#), formed in 1968 to provide independent truckers with permitting, DOT compliance and fuel tax reporting services, and [TBS Insurance Agency](#), founded in 1998 to provide truck insurance nationwide.

The TBS family ownership group has more than 50 years of experience serving independent truckers. Our clients receive outstanding service from a seasoned and dependable staff. TBS Factoring Service is among the most highly regarded freight-factoring companies in the USA.

 LET'S BE FRIENDS





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## VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

One of the most impressionable stories we've heard about the importance of high-quality inspections comes from a Minnesota Department of Transportation (DOT) training specialist, who recounts a tragic interstate crash involving a bus carrying members of the Chippewa Falls (Wisconsin) High School Marching Band. The bus slammed into a jackknifed tractor-trailer, killing five people and injuring nearly 30 others. During the investigation, questions surfaced regarding possible faulty brakes on the bus. The focus later turned to the semi driver, who would face numerous criminal and federal charges before they were overturned or dismissed.

"I want you to think about this crash whenever you go out and inspect your truck," said the DOT specialist. "Never downplay the importance of a high-quality vehicle inspection. Maintain a routine of performing these inspections and resist the temptation of taking shortcuts."

Most agree that over-the-road trucking is one of the most over-regulated industries in the United States, but the importance of high-quality inspections remains a true reality of the road. We have created this series of free reference guides to help keep you and others safe, as well as your rig revved and ready to make you money from bumper to bumper.

Safe travels!

## FMCSA

The primary mission of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. Formerly a part of the Federal Highway Administration, FMCSA was established within the Department of Transportation on January 1, 2000.

Among its activities that contribute to ensuring safety in motor carrier operations through strong enforcement of safety regulations is the conducting of roadside vehicle inspections. The objective of these on-the-spot safety inspections is to prevent accidents caused by vehicle deficiencies, such as worn, failed or incorrectly adjusted components.



# CHAPTER #1

## IT'S THE LAW



Drivers must conduct both pre-trip and post-trip vehicle inspections, as spelled out in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR). *Part 396.13, Driver inspection*, states:

*Before driving a motor vehicle, the driver shall:*

- a. Be satisfied that the motor vehicle is in safe operating condition.*
- b. Review the last driver vehicle inspection report.*
- c. Sign the report, only if defects or deficiencies were noted by the driver who prepared the report, to acknowledge that the driver has reviewed it and that there is a certification that the required repairs have been performed. The signature requirement does not apply to listed defects on a towed unit which is no longer part of the vehicle combination.*

## DRIVER VEHICLE INSPECTION REPORTS

As required by *Part 396.11, Driver vehicle inspection reports*, every driver also must prepare a report in writing at the completion of each day's work on each vehicle operated as part of the post-trip inspection. The report needs to cover, at a minimum, the following parts and accessories:

- Service brakes, including trailer brake connections
- Parking brake
- Steering mechanism
- Lighting devices and reflectors
- Tires
- Horn
- Windshield wipers
- Rear-vision mirrors
- Coupling devices
- Wheels and rims
- Emergency equipment

## IT'S THE LAW (CONTINUED...)

Furthermore, the driver vehicle inspection report (DVIR) needs to identify the vehicle and list any defect or deficiency discovered by or reported to the driver that would affect safety during operation of the vehicle or result in its mechanical breakdown. If no defect or deficiency is discovered or reported by the driver, that needs to be indicated. The driver must sign the DVIR.

If a driver operates more than one vehicle during the day, *Part 396.11* requires that a report be prepared for each vehicle operated.

Procedures and the sequence for vehicle inspections vary, but all cover certain areas, as stated in FMCSR *Part 392.7, Equipment, inspection and use*:

*No commercial motor vehicle shall be driven unless the driver is satisfied that the following parts and accessories are in good working order, nor shall any driver fail to use or make use of such parts and accessories when and as needed:*

- Service brakes, including trailer brake connections
- Lighting devices and reflectors
- Windshield wiper or wipers
- Parking (hand) brake
- Tires
- Rear-vision mirror or mirrors
- Steering mechanism
- Horn
- Coupling devices



## MEDICAL CARD VERIFICATION PROGRAM

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is concerned that all driver medical cards may not be valid. As a result, the agency has begun an enforcement initiative to make certain that each driver is legally certified to be driving a commercial motor vehicle.

As part of their routine enforcement activities, federal, state and local safety inspectors are conducting random verifications of medical examiner certificates to crack down on fraudulent ones.

In addition to asking to see a driver's medical card, law enforcement can now contact the medical examiner's office at the telephone number indicated on the certificate to confirm that the document presented by the driver matches the records maintained by the medical examiner with regard to the driver's name and date of birth, date of issuance of the medical certification and any restrictions indicated on the card.

# CHAPTER #2



## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

When properly performed, pre-trip and post-trip vehicle inspections are an important part of the overall safe operation of a commercial motor vehicle (CMV). You should employ at least four of your five senses – feeling, touching, looking, listening and smelling – when inspecting a vehicle's condition. A good detective will locate all possible mechanical, electrical and/or other conditions that may cause an interruption of timely service, breakdown or an accident.

Effective vehicle inspections are essential to keeping drivers and others safe while on the road. It will also eliminate the frustration of having to wait for repairs or a vehicle replacement during a run. Plus, inspections help keep a vehicle in good working order, which in turn will prolong vehicle life and reduce operating costs.

While both drivers and owners have a duty to make sure their vehicles are inspected daily, the driver is ultimately responsible for making certain that the vehicle being driven is in a safe operating condition.

## HOW TO CONDUCT AN INSPECTION

In general, procedures, checklists and sequences for vehicle inspections center on several key elements, beginning with an overview of the vehicle. When approaching the vehicle, the driver should visually check its general condition, looking for any obvious signs of problems or issues, including indications of fresh oil, coolant, grease or fuel leaks underneath the vehicle.

Other elements are: inside the cab, the engine compartment, lighting, the brake system, tires and wheels, etc.; as well as performing a walk-around inspection of the outside of the entire vehicle, and checking the previous driver vehicle inspection report (DVIR) for any problems noted, and if so, making certain that any problems affecting safety were repaired.

A number of trucking industry organizations offer easy-to-understand instructions and a step-by-step approach to help drivers learn how to efficiently and effectively inspect a vehicle in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations.

# CHAPTER #3

## SIX LEVELS OF INSPECTION

There are six levels to the U.S. Department of Transportation's vehicle-inspection program:



### **Level I**

*North American Standard Inspection.* This is the most comprehensive of the inspections and includes an examination of compliance with the critical elements of both driver and vehicle regulations.



### **Level II**

*Walk-Around Driver/Vehicle Inspection.* This is similar to the *Level I* inspection but includes only those items that can be inspected without physically getting under the vehicle.



### **Level III**

*Driver/Credential Inspection.* This is an examination of a driver's license, medical certification, *Hours of Service (HOS)* compliance, seat-belt use, driver vehicle inspection report (DVIR) and hazardous materials requirements, as applicable.



### **Level IV**

*Special Inspection.* These typically include a one-time examination of a particular item and are normally made in support of a study or to verify or refute a suspected trend.



### **Level V**

*Vehicle-Only Inspection.* This is an inspection that includes each of the vehicle inspection items specified under the *Level I* inspection, without a driver being present and conducted at any location.



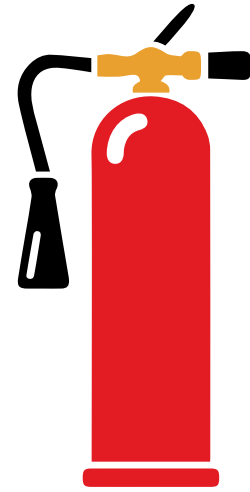
### **Level VI**

*Enhanced North American Standard Inspection for Radioactive Shipments.* This is an inspection for select shipments of radioactive material that includes enhancements to the *Level I* inspection.



# CHAPTER #4

## EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT



Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) *Part 392.8, Emergency equipment, inspection and use*, states that no commercial motor vehicle shall be driven unless the driver is satisfied that emergency equipment required by *Part 393.95, Emergency equipment on all power units*, is in place and ready for use.

Emergency equipment listed in *Part 393.95* includes: a properly charged, inspected and operable fire extinguisher; spare fuses; and warning devices for stopped vehicles.

## TOP VIOLATIONS

The most common vehicle-maintenance violations cited during roadside inspections are:

- Brake problems
- Defective lighting
- Parts/accessories in an unsafe condition
- Tire-tread depth of less than 2/32 inch
- Oil and/or grease leaks
- No proof of an annual vehicle inspection

# CHAPTER #5



## UNSAFE OPERATION

Related to pre-trip inspections is Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) *Part 396.7, Unsafe operations forbidden*. It states: *A motor vehicle shall not be operated in such a condition as to likely cause an accident or a breakdown of the vehicle*. However, this regulation contains an exemption that allows any motor vehicle discovered to be in an unsafe condition while being operated to continue on to the nearest place where repairs can safely be made.

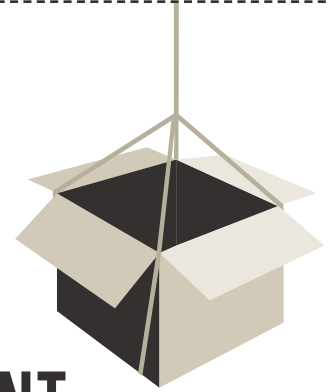
## HOURS OF SERVICE VIOLATIONS

The most common violation of *Hours of Service (HOS)* regulations is “form and manner,” according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). These occur when logbook entries are missing certain information, are incomplete or are filled out improperly.

The most common driver out-of-service violations include: logs not being up-to-date; and exceeding the 11-hour driving limit, the 14-hour limit or the 60/70-hour on-duty limit.

# CHAPTER #6

## CARGO SECUREMENT



Vehicle inspections also need to include cargo securement, per Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) *Part 392.9, Inspection of cargo, cargo securement devices and systems*. Under this rule, a driver may not operate a commercial motor vehicle unless its cargo is properly distributed and adequately secured as specified in *Parts 393.100 through 393.136*. These sections cover cargo-securement devices and systems and the specific securement required by commodity type.

Also, tailgate, tailboard, doors, tarpaulins and other equipment used in a vehicle's operation, and the means of fastening the cargo, must be secured, and cargo or any other object cannot obscure the driver's view ahead or to the right or left sides.

Additionally, *Part 392.9* states that a driver must inspect the cargo and the load-securement devices within the first 50 miles after beginning a trip and make any adjustments to the cargo or devices, as necessary. Likewise, a driver needs to reexamine and make any necessary adjustments whenever there's a change-of-duty status, the vehicle hasn't been driven for three hours or the vehicle has been driven for 150 miles, whichever occurs first.

## ATTENTION TO DETAIL

There are three essential elements to safely transporting cargo: loading the cargo properly, restraining the cargo correctly and using adequate securing devices.

Under FMCSA's Compliance Safety Accountability (CSA) safety initiative, violations for improperly secured cargo negatively impact both a fleet and a driver. While there are some violations for which a driver is not responsible (including aspects of the law that assigns responsibility to either the shipper or the fleet), if an inspector determines that the violation is one the driver could have rectified, a separate violation will be entered into that driver's personal database.

*A Driver's Handbook on Cargo Securement* is available from FMCSA.

# CHAPTER #7



## ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) authorizes roadside vehicle inspections. These are on-the-spot safety checkups used to enforce motor-carrier safety laws, promote highway safety and reduce commercial vehicle-related incidents by removing unsafe trucks or loads and unqualified drivers from the highway. These inspections can take place, for example, alongside the road, at a rest area or weigh station, or at a port of entry.

If a vehicle does not pass a roadside inspection because serious defects are discovered, it will be placed out of service. Necessary repairs must be made before the vehicle can be driven again.

Drivers are also subject to inspection and may be placed out of service, as well, if they don't have their proper credentials or if they are found to violate *Hours of Service (HOS)* regulations.

Drivers who conduct proper vehicle inspections can help ensure that a roadside inspection will not be a problem.

## DRIVER INSPECTIONS

Drivers are also subject to roadside inspections, during which officials typically look for:

- A driver's commercial driver's license (CDL) with the proper class and endorsements
- Shipping papers for hazardous-materials transportation
- A driver's medical certificate, if required
- Logbook and record-of-duty status
- Seat-belt use
- Alcohol or drug use and/or possession
- Unauthorized passengers

# ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS (CONTINUED...)



Federal, state and local safety inspectors use the *North American Uniform Out-of-Service Criteria* as a reference guide for determining whether to place a commercial motor vehicle or its driver out of service. The *Criteria* is a detailed list of conditions that are sufficiently hazardous to justify restricting further operation by a driver or vehicle and must be corrected before operations can resume.

Correction of less-severe violations may be deferred to a more convenient time and place.

The *Criteria* was developed and is maintained by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), a not-for-profit organization comprising local, state, provincial, territorial and federal motor-carrier safety officials and industry representatives from the United States, Canada and Mexico. Its mission is to promote commercial motor-vehicle safety and security by providing leadership to enforcement, industry and policymakers.

Each year, the CVSA reviews its *North American Uniform Out-of-Service Criteria* and makes necessary changes.

A commercial motor vehicle that passes a Level I or Level V roadside inspection will receive a decal that indicates the vehicle was recently inspected and no violations were found. The decal, affixed to the vehicle by a certified CVSA inspector, remains valid for up to three months.

The quarter in which an inspection is performed is indicated by the color of the decal. For example, the decal for January/February/March is green; April/May/June is yellow; July/August/September is orange; and October/November/December is white.

Vehicles displaying a valid decal are generally not subject to reinspection unless a problem is observed.

## GOING WIRELESS

Current research involves using wireless technology to transmit real-time information on CMVs, drivers and motor carriers to a DOT system as the vehicle approaches a fixed inspection station or enters a pre-defined geofence.

While the vehicle continues down the highway, this information is assessed for compliance and a wireless inspection report is sent to the participating carrier, local roadside enforcement and FMCSA's Safety Measurement System (SMS), as part of CSA (Compliance Safety Accountability).

If a critical safety compliance issue is identified, the motor carrier and law enforcement will be notified, and the driver will be directed to the next inspection station.

The entire transaction occurs between 30 and 60 seconds.

# CHAPTER #8

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR A ROADSIDE INSPECTION



Drivers should be prepared for a roadside inspection at any time. While keeping a commercial vehicle well maintained is very important, so is the driver's attitude. How drivers conduct themselves in an inspection may greatly impact how the inspection turns out.

Here are several tips for a smoother roadside inspection:

- Keep the cab clean and organized. Don't have a lot of stuff (papers, trash, hats, etc.) sitting on the dashboard.
- Make certain to have all required documentation, such as your commercial driver's license (CDL), medical certificate, logbook and all load-related paperwork available.
- Keep your logbook neat, legal and current to the last change-of-duty status.
- Be professional and act in a courteous manner. Do not be combative.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Common sense and cooperation are the best course of action.

## VIOLATIONS TO AVOID

These are some safety violations that have a serious impact on a driver's and a carrier's CSA data:

- Jumping an out-of-service order
- Violating *Hours-of-Service* regulations
- Operating a commercial motor while ill, fatigued or under the influence
- Required vehicle lighting not operating
- Defective tires
- Cargo not secured

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