The **Driver's Guide** to Roadside Inspections

Roadside inspections are examinations of commercial motor vehicles or drivers. These inspections are conducted by specially trained inspectors on behalf of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and are used primarily to intervene when motor carriers or their drivers are in violation of FMCSA regulations or operating unsafely. To help you avoid violations, it's important to have a basic understanding of roadside inspections.

THE WHO'S WHO OF ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS

The Department of Transportation (DOT)	The FMCSA	The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA)	The Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP)
The DOT is responsible for commercial motor vehicle safety. It has overall authority when it comes to commercial fleets.	An agency within the DOT, the FMCSA's goal is to prevent interstate commercial motor vehicle-related fatalities and injuries. To accomplish this, they enforce DOT safety regulations, target high-risk carriers and commercial motor vehicle drivers, and improve safety information systems.	The CVSA is a nonprofit association dedicated to ensuring the uniformity of commercial motor vehicle inspections and enforcement activities.	The MCSAP is a federal grant program that provides financial assistance to state governments, allowing them to better monitor FMCSA regulation compliance.

LEVELS OF INSPECTIONS

There are eight types of CVSA inspections, each of which examines different aspects of a commercial motor vehicle and the drivers who operate them. Level I, II and III inspections are the most common.

Level I: North American Standard Inspection	Level II: Walk-around Driver/Vehicle Inspection	Level III: Driver-only Inspection
This inspection examines the credentials of motor carriers and drivers, records of duty status, the mechanical condition of vehicles, and any hazardous materials or dangerous goods that may be present.	This is a driver and walk-around vehicle inspection. This inspection involves items that can be checked without physically getting under the vehicle.	This is a driver-only inspection that includes an examination of the driver's credentials and documents.

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WHY AM I BEING INSPECTED?

Drivers and vehicles may be flagged for inspections for a variety of reasons including:

An inspector notices a visible violation—If an inspector identifies a violation simply by looking at a vehicle, a full inspection may occur. Easy violations for inspectors to catch can include nonfunctioning lights, defective tires and improper cargo securement.

A patrol officer notices a driving infraction—Commercial motor vehicles can be pulled over for moving violations. When this occurs, inspectors will often, at a minimum, conduct a Level III inspection. Traffic violations that could lead to roadside inspections include speeding, following too close and failing to obey traffic signs.

A motor carrier has a high Inspection Selection System (ISS) score—The ISS, which is based on BASIC scores, is used at roadside inspection stations to help inspectors identify and prioritize motor carriers for safety inspections. Under the ISS, motor carriers are assigned an inspection recommendation as follows:

- Inspect (an inspection is warranted)
- Optional (an inspection may be warranted)
- Pass (an inspection is not required)

The vehicle is involved in an accident—In most jurisdictions, both the commercial motor vehicle and its driver will be inspected following an accident.

Inspections may also be random. This often occurs if an inspector at a fixed facility hasn't seen any violations for a long period of time or during the CVSA's annual International Roadcheck.

VIOLATIONS AND OOS ORDERS

When completing the vehicle inspection, officers will make note of the driver, motor carrier, vehicle and any violations that were discovered. Officers will then compare any issues to the CVSA's North American Out-of-Service Criteria to determine whether or not the vehicle should be placed OOS. If a vehicle is placed OOS, the issue must be corrected before it's allowed to leave the inspection site. For critical issues that cannot be fixed on-site, vehicles may need to be towed away. For violations that do not result in OOS orders, issues must be rectified as soon as possible.

AVOIDING VIOLATIONS

As a driver, you have a lot of control over how good or bad your roadside inspection goes. The following tips can help you ensure smooth inspections and avoid potential violations:

- Treat inspectors with courtesy and respect.
- Keep a clean and tidy truck. This will make the inspection go faster. Many inspectors feel a dirty or untidy truck is a red flag for other issues.
- Ensure cargo is secured properly.
- Complete thorough pre-trip inspections.
- Understand and comply with hours-of-service requirements, regardless of whether you're using paper logs or electronic logging devices.
- Have applicable documentation ready, including:
  - Driver's licenses
  - Medical cards
  - Vehicle registration
  - Information regarding your annual inspection
  - Daily vehicle inspection reports (DVIRs)
  - Any relevant permits
  - Shipping documentation
  - Record of duty status (RODS)

FURTHER EDUCATION

To learn more about the importance of roadside inspections and how to avoid potential issues,contact your supervisor today.