



The Importance of Completing a Pre-Trip Vehicle Inspection

Most operations within the Comp Alliance, including school districts and municipalities, maintain commercial motor vehicles (CMV) in their fleet. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Safety Planner Chapter 5.2.2 (CFR Title 49, subsection 396.13) states the following regarding pre-trip vehicle inspections of CMVs:

“Before operating the vehicle, the driver must inspect the vehicle and be satisfied that it is in safe operating condition. If the last vehicle inspection report notes any deficiencies, the driver must review and sign to acknowledge and certify that the required repairs were made.” ¹

A pre-trip inspection aims to identify potential problems before they cause a vehicle failure (breakdown) or collision. Unsafe vehicles, especially those loaded, or even overloaded, with plows and salt or sand in the winter months, can contribute to major vehicle accidents and serious injuries to the driver and passengers. Emphasize that your staff complete the required daily pre-trip inspection for all CMVs, adhering to the correct process.

Pre-trip inspections should be documented by each driver with a commercial driver's license (CDL). The inspection should consider the following vehicle parts and accessories, listing any defects identified during the inspection:

- Service brakes, including air braking systems
- Steering system
- Tires: inflation and wear
- Horn
- Windshield wipers and fluid
- Lights and reflectors
- Rearview and side-view mirrors: alignment and clarity
- Wheels and rims
- Heater/Defroster system
- Emergency equipment



As a part of the licensing process, all drivers holding a CDL have been tested on pre-trip vehicle inspections per NYS CDL manual standards. This pre-trip inspection skills test requires drivers to identify and comment on these areas of the vehicle:

- The engine compartment: hoses, leaks, oil level, coolant level, power steering fluid, and belts
- The cabin: clutch, gearshift, oil pressure gauge, temperature gauge, air gauge, ammeter/voltmeter, and seatbelt
- The outside: body damage, fluid spills, and any unusual or out-of-place items

Review this process with your CDL staff and stress the importance of daily pre-trip inspections to ensure vehicle readiness and driver safety. You can also require a pared-down version of the inspection for drivers of non-CMV, like pickup trucks and other municipal vehicles, to ensure their safe operation.

(1): [FMCSA Motor Carrier Safety Planner](#)

