

Make a pre-trip vehicle inspection part of every fleet driver's routine



Best practice is to have all your vehicles on a preventative maintenance schedule where a qualified technician inspects and maintains vehicles according to the vehicle manufacturer's specifications. However, safety-critical components often fail or become worn between scheduled inspections, placing a driver in an unsafe situation from an accident or being stranded on the side of the road. Requiring drivers to conduct daily pre-trip inspections is recommended to identify vehicle defects that occur between scheduled maintenance. A checklist should be used to guide drivers through the daily process.



A driver's thorough pre-trip inspection can help save people and property.

Items to include in your fleet's inspection checklist

While the pre-inspection checklist you adopt for your drivers may vary based on your fleet's vehicles and your company's business needs, here are some typical items you may wish to include:

- **Tire pressure.** Each change in air temperature of 10 degrees F can cause tires used on cars, vans and light trucks to lose 1 psi of pressure. Low tire pressure hinders stopping distance and gas mileage.
- **Tire-tread depth.** Insufficient treads increase the chances of losing control due to hydroplaning on standing water, snow or ice.
- **Car lights.** Headlights, turn signals and brake lamps help drivers see and be seen by other motorists and pedestrians.
- **Windshield wipers.** Excessively worn wipers will reduce visibility when driving in rain or snow.
- **Cabin temperature.** Improperly operating controls can lead to physical stress, fatigue and distracted driving.
- **Emergency kit.** Missing, broken or discharged emergency equipment needed to safeguard the vehicle and driver in the event of a crash or breakdown should be replaced so the kit is always fully stocked.
- **Windshield glass.** Chipped, cracked or deteriorating glass weakens the final barrier that keeps the driver from being ejected during a crash and can inhibit clear vision of the road ahead.
- **Mirror swivel mounts.** Mirrors that are frozen or loose prevent the driver from properly adjusting them to cover all blind areas. This can lead to an increased risk of sideswipes or turning collisions.
- **DOT regulated vehicles.** Review Parts §396.11 and §396.13 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations for driver inspection requirements when operating regulated vehicles.

Why it pays to make pre-trip inspections routine

Besides the role it plays in protecting people and property, having your drivers conduct routine pre-trip inspections can help you:

- Reduce the potential for delays caused by unexpected breakdowns
- Identify early-stage problems before they can grow into serious issues
- Spot activities that erode profitability, such as driving on underinflated tires, which results in higher fuel consumption and shorter tire life



Tires that are underinflated by more than 25% are 3 times more likely to cause crashes than tires with proper inflation.¹

Underscoring your company's commitment to safety

If your organization has always made safety a priority, that will go a long way toward obtaining the buy-in of drivers being asked to perform pre-trip inspections. In keeping with that safety commitment, we suggest you do the following prior to introducing your checklist to fleet personnel:

- **Schedule time to educate supervisors and drivers** on the benefits of pre-trip inspections, such as less vehicle downtime, reduced chances of breakdown during a trip and the comparative ease of scheduling repairs when they are not urgently needed.
- **Ask your maintenance team**, local garage service center manager or vehicle leasing team to assist in designing a practical vehicle inspection form well-suited to the vehicles in your fleet and the degree to which your drivers are tech savvy. Training and education on what to observe and how to differentiate “functional” from “problematic” will be critical to getting good data out of the program.
- **Be ready to provide feedback** to drivers so they know their efforts are translating into effective action. This motivation will help them continue to take the inspection process seriously over the long term. Some fleets publish a monthly or quarterly update of items corrected based on pre-trip notifications, while others track this data by computer to spot trends that may indicate a warranty or recall issue.
- **Consider technological aids** to assist drivers and to enforce policy. There are telematics devices that precisely read data from the engine and will help with predictive maintenance (diagnosing a problem days or weeks before it manifests actual symptoms).



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For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services at 1-866-808-2101 or LCS@nationwide.com.

¹ “Tire-Related Factors in the Pre-Crash Phase,” National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT HS 811 617, Eun-Ha Choi (April 2012), p. vi.