



VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

September 2019

A truck that is mechanically safe and in compliance with FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) regulations is a critical part of any safety program and culture. The FMCSA and State enforcement officers are tasked with making sure commercial motor vehicles are operating safely on our nation's highways.

CSA (Compliance, Safety and Accountability) scores are part of vehicle maintenance success. Inspections with violations will add points to your score.

The idea is to inspect the equipment before the trip to find defects and repair them before enforcement finds them. When a defect is found before it is written up on an inspection, it saves both time and money since you can repair it at your shop versus having to use a road repair service.

Following a good preventative maintenance program will also avoid delays due to break-downs which will affect customer and driver satisfaction. Some points on vehicle maintenance you can share with your drivers (and staff who work with drivers) include:

- Do a detailed pre-trip and post-trip inspection of the complete unit EVERY time.
- Complete the Daily Vehicle Inspection Report (DVIR) if defects are noted. NOTE: Even though the FMCSA only requires the DVIR to be done when there are defects, many motor carriers have continued the DVIR as a company policy. Assure all repairs are completed and required signatures are in place along with repair orders to document the vehicle maintenance file.

- Conduct inspections of the equipment during the trip EVERY time it is stopped. If defects are noted during these inspections, repair them before operating the vehicle.
- Pay close attention to lights and tires. These are "observable" defects and are often cited on inspections. These "observable" defects can also lead to more detailed inspections and the potential for more violations on both the vehicle and driver.
- All lights must work ALL the time. Check ALL light functions during inspections. You cannot presume that the turn signals work because the hazard flashers work.
- Check tire condition before, during and after the trip. Road hazards can cause cuts and hitting potholes can damage belts causing bulges and defects.
- Check air pressure with a gauge regularly. "Bumping" a tire may give you an indication of tire pressure, but it really can't tell the difference between 75 and 100 psi.
- Tire tread depth must be checked during the pre-trip inspection. Steer tires must be greater than 4/32nd's and drive tires more than 2/32nd's to be FMCSA "legal." You can use the penny (2/32's) or quarter method (4/32's) to test the tires or purchase a tire depth gauge.

A strong equipment maintenance program is required by the FMCSA and is just good business. Waiting for something to break or fail might seem like a way to save money, but it really costs more due to having to make repairs on the road along with lost time and productivity.

The goal is to provide service to customers in a safe, cost-effective manner which is supported by a proactive vehicle maintenance program.