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4 Tips for Passing Your Next Roadside Inspection

Introduction

Do your drivers get nervous stopping at an inspection station? Do their palms get a little sweaty when pulled over by a state trooper because they're unsure of what they might find? You can alleviate much of their stress by making sure you have good systems in place - and that starts long before the actual roadside inspection.

Based on recent FMCSA data,

20 out of every 100 vehicles (1 in 5) that get inspected receive an Out-of-Service (OOS) violation.

The difficulty of clearing road inspections is real. With more than 70,000 drivers and 200,000 vehicles receiving violation notices every year, it makes sense to give your drivers every chance to prepare for and pass roadside inspections.

Why improve your pass rate?

Successfully overcoming the challenge of roadside inspections not only benefits your business, but it also puts your drivers at ease.

This comparison chart gives you a quick overview of why it makes sense to review your inspection process and make changes where needed.

Passing Roadside Inspections	Failing Roadside Inspections*
✓ Improved productivity and efficiency of your drivers	✗ OOS orders mean lost productivity or missing deadlines
✓ Improved CSA score	✗ Increased targeting for future inspections / more chance of incurring additional violations
✓ Reduced chance of future or more in-depth inspections	✗ Drop in driver morale
✓ Better company reputation and more reliable ETAs	✗ Lost business due to poor record or fewer available vehicles to meet customer commitments

*This is when a driver or vehicle receives an OOS order

Do your pre-trip inspection to pass your roadside

To improve the success rate with roadside inspections you need to trace it back to where many of the problems originate from - issues with driver inspections, both pre and post-trip. Get that right and expect better results at your next roadside inspection.

Speaking of pre-trip inspections, federal laws (DOT 392.7) require that no commercial motor vehicle (CMV) shall be driven unless the driver is satisfied. While that can sound subjective it implies that drivers should do a detailed visual inspection - service brakes, trailer brake connections, parking brakes, steering mechanisms, lighting devices, reflectors, horns, tires and windshield wipers - to make sure the vehicle is road-worthy and without observable defects.

It's about catching problems before they become a problem and these four tips will help your whole team to work toward that goal.

Tip #1
Getting Schooled

Educating your team

With more than 1,050 potential violations it can seem like a daunting task to get your drivers up to speed with all the regulations that could lead to a failed inspection. Even the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) has a 76-page manual on the subject.

It seems like a lot but break it down into sections and it quickly becomes manageable. In terms of objectives for your team, everyone should have a working knowledge of the following aspects of vehicle compliance:

↘ The 7 BASIC categories and what they cover

↘ What the Inspection Selection System (ISS) is and how it affects your fleet

↘ The regulations that apply to commercial vehicle operators - essentially Part 392 of the FMCSA regulations

↘ What your CSA score is and how it's calculated

↘ The types of violations you generally get targeted for (Tip #2 addresses this in more detail)

↘ The three different levels of inspections - Level 1 North American Standard Driver and Vehicle, Level 2 Vehicle Only / Walk-around or Level 3 Driver Only

↘ An overview of vehicle inspections, DVIRs and what to look for

The FMCSA provides a range of resources online that can be used to complement your own training collateral.

Understanding the current state and specific vulnerabilities of your business will help you to get the best return on company training programs - and have the biggest impact on reducing compliance violations.

Tip #2
Know Thy Fleet

Review your fleet's current state of play

It's dangerous to simply rely on a good CSA score. There's always the possibility you've just been lucky. There's a big difference between a safe fleet and an unsafe fleet waiting to be discovered, even if the CSA scores are identical.

We mentioned before the huge number of potential violations that can crop up at a roadside inspection - understanding your fleet's behavior can help you laser focus on what is referred to as the 'critical few'.

To get a good grasp of what you need to work on, review your OOS rates.

Review your inspections reports including what and when they were triggered - you'll start to identify patterns for what's generating the bulk of violations. Is it observable defects? Are drivers getting citations, such as speeding tickets, that lead to an inspection?

Work backward to identify root causes and you'll know where to make changes. One beneficial change is removing subjectivity from vehicle inspections - to achieve this you need to standardize.

Tip #3
Consistency is Key

Standardizing your inspection process

This particular suggestion is a good reminder that all four of these tips are designed to work together to improve the efficacy of your internal inspection process. Use the information you gather (Tip #2) to build your standardized inspection (Tip #3), which you'll train your team with (Tip #1) and they can follow through on with updated technology (Tip #4).

Creating a standard inspection is about deciding how you want your drivers to inspect their vehicles day after day, week after week. Make it completely objective so there's no room for variation that could trigger an inspection.

With standard pre and post-trip inspections in place, you'll also be able to start measuring how well drivers adhere to the process and whether training is in order.

Technology can improve the quality of your inspection process in other ways - let's take a minute to consider how.
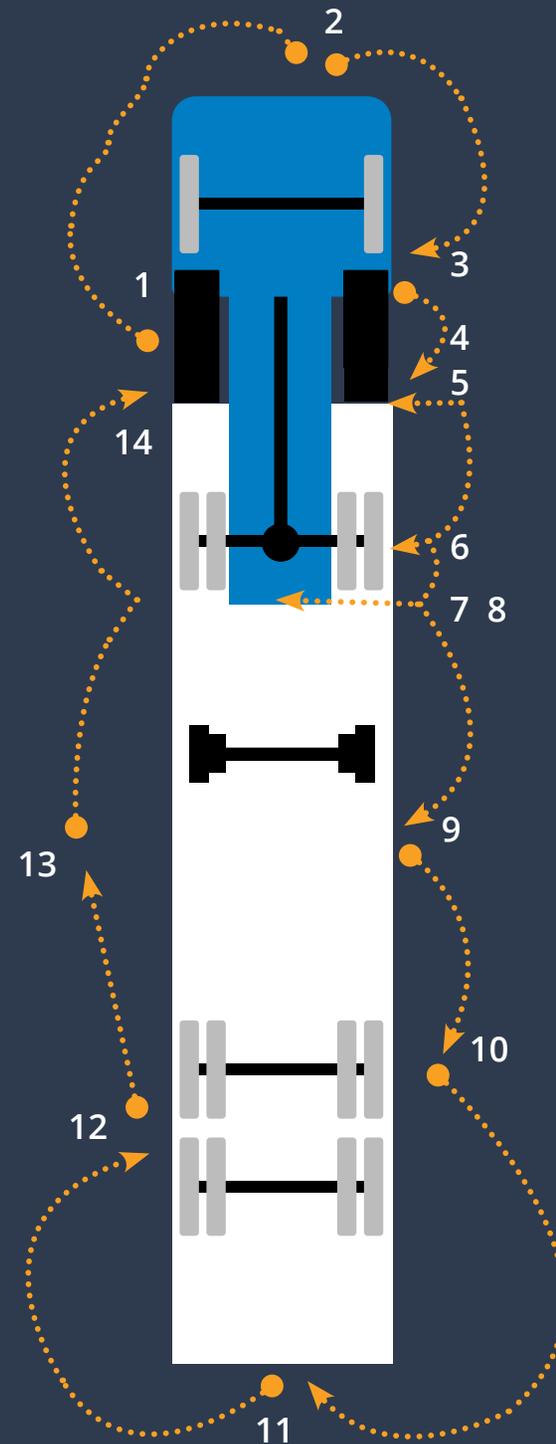
Bonus Tip:

Go out there and take photos of each step - each and every component - turn it into a PowerPoint and, boom, there's your training. Have it as part of your orientation and an annual refresher for all drivers.

Tip #4 - Get Your Geek On
Behavior-based management technology

While a lot of fleets are still largely paper-based, the introduction of the ELD mandate is forcing change. This is proving to be a perfect opportunity to embrace technology to improve efficiency, productivity and inspection standards.

Custom inspection forms [Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIR)] Provide operators with step-by-step checks (include photos of satisfactory condition). Drivers can complete using their mobile device and sign-off electronically. Proprietary technology verifies actual inspection is done. **LEARN MORE.**

On-premise navigation - Drivers can get accurate turn-by-turn directions to the loading dock with safety tips for each location and minimize costs (currently estimated at 28% of the total trip cost). Some carriers also state that on-site collisions account for over 70% of accident claims. **LEARN MORE.**

Electronic logging device - Now legally required for most commercial drivers, ELDs will streamline Hours-of-Service (HOS) record-keeping and eliminate all Form & Manner errors (currently these represent approximately a quarter of all violations). **LEARN MORE.**

Smart, automated routing - Get optimized routes for all your vehicles with allowance for flexible sales territories, multiple stops and route restrictions (such as having trucks avoid a particularly troublesome inspection station). **LEARN MORE.**

Behavior-based scorecards - Drivers can compete for rewards based on good driving behavior using actual vehicle data (Driver Feedback Devices). **LEARN MORE.**

ETA & Scheduling - Work more efficiently with customers including shippers and receivers to schedule loading/unloading. **Learn how with these helpful tips discussed in the Telogis blog.**

Some fleets are shy about introducing technology fearing a backlash from drivers - the reality is that when you take advantage of tools to prevent or minimize idle time everybody wins. Drivers, like everybody else in the business, know that if the wheels aren't turning they're not earning.

Improving more than just your pass rate

Raising the standard of your vehicle inspections with the aid of technology and better processes is just the start. It's a critical time for fleets to invest in better systems to overcome the expected impact of future changes including the introduction of electronic logging.

↘ **More emphasis on vehicle safety** - With HOS violations being a thing of the past, inspectors will focus more on checking vehicles are up to standard.

↘ **Loss of productivity (12% est.)** - Electronic logging will eliminate the option drivers currently have to hide hours and compress miles. Fleets will need to work more efficiently to make up the reduced driving hours.

If you need help with making these changes, to stay compliant and competitive, contact our sales team today.

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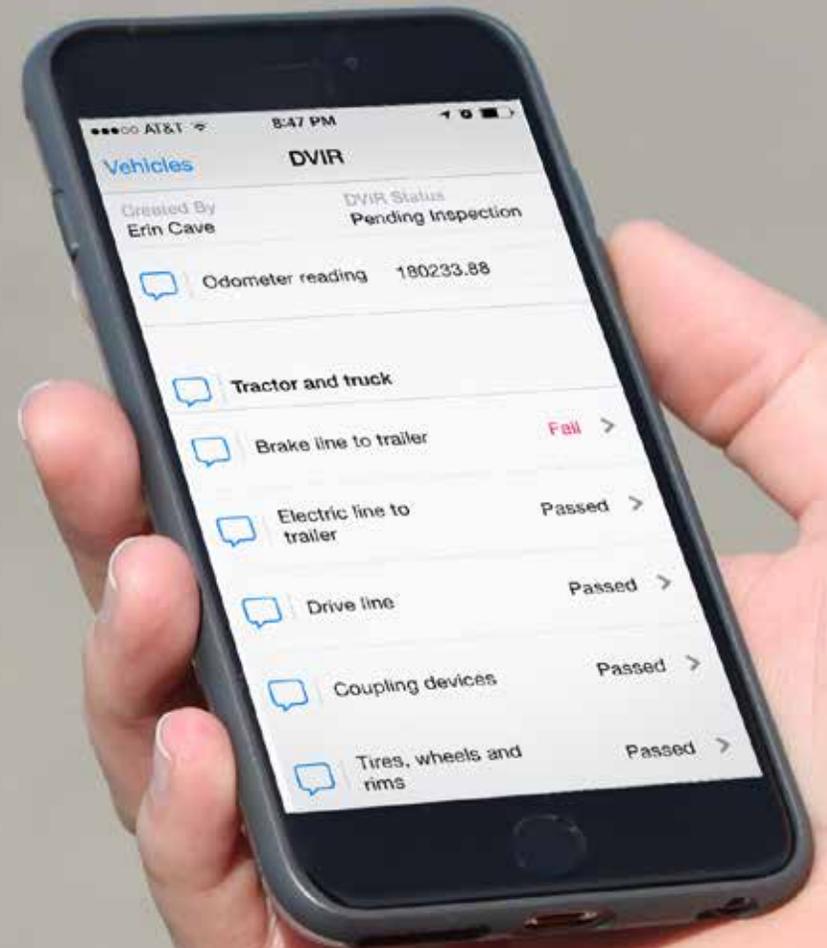
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Telogis, a Verizon company, develops and markets a cloud-based Mobile Enterprise Management (MEM) software platform for companies that require dynamic routing, commercial navigation, advanced telematics and mobile apps to keep drivers safer, manage compliance and more. We invite you to engage with us to learn more about how we can connect the vehicles, people and the work that's being done outside the four walls of your business.

Once connected, the Telogis MEM platform optimizes and automates your business to drive safety, productivity and efficiency. Telogis also builds its technologies into vehicles and equipment from leading manufacturers including Ford, GM, Hino, Isuzu, Mack, Volvo and Manitowoc Cranes, eliminating the need for hardware installations. Telogis also has strategic partnerships with Apple and Element to deliver opportunities to improve every aspect of your technology deployment and implementation.

To learn more about Telogis, visit **www.telogis.com** or call toll free: **866-TELOGIS (866-835-6447)**

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