

Pre- and Post-Trip Inspection Dos and Don'ts

Minimizing over-the-road breakdowns and preventing out-of-service violations are two of the many benefits of pre- and post-trip inspections. Use this list of dos and don'ts to complete your inspections the right way.

Don't: Think they're optional. They're the law. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulation 392.7 requires pre-trip inspections, while regulation 396.11 mandates post-trip inspections.

Do: Know what to check. For a pre-trip inspection, check:

- parking brakes
- service brakes
- tires and rims
- suspension
- steering system
- fluid levels
- belts and hoses
- electrical and air lines
- coupling devices
- wipers
- mirrors
- horn
- seatbelts
- gauges
- air brake warning system
- emergency kit
- lights, reflectors and signals
- all applicable paperwork

Check the same items for post-trip inspections minus the fluid checks—don't touch anything that might be hot!

Don't: Kick-check the tires. Thump checks don't work, because a tire sounds empty only if it's nearly 100% out of air. Use a calibrated tire gauge instead. Also, make sure all tires have the proper tread depth and that all lug nuts are tight.

Do: Double-check the brakes. More than 1 out of every 4 vehicle out-of-service violations in the U.S. during the 2021 Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's International Roadcheck were due to brake system violations.



Don't: Do an inspection differently each time.

Instead, develop a routine, and go in the same order with each pre- and post-trip check. Consider starting at the cab, then inside the cab, the front of the vehicle, then around the truck starting at the driver's side.

Do: Take your time. There's no rush. Budget 10-15 minutes for a proper pre-trip inspection.

Don't: Forget the interior. A clean cab tells an inspector that the rest of the vehicle is in good shape. A dirty cab says the opposite.

Do: Chock your wheels. It's the best way to make sure your truck doesn't accidentally move when you're doing a pre- or post-trip check. Forgetting to do so could cause a serious injury—or worse.

Do: Keep accurate logs. Whether you use electronic or paper logs, keep them updated regularly, and make sure all other paperwork (driver's license, inspection, insurance) is current.

Don't: Ignore potential problems. If you spot something out of the ordinary during your post-trip inspection, report it to dispatch immediately.