

# RISK ADVISOR

October 2024



## T R U C K I N G

### The Importance of Pre-trip Inspections

Motor carriers have a lot to manage; they must ensure the safety of their drivers as well as the general public, all while remaining compliant with regulations set by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). In order to demonstrate this compliance, passing roadside inspections is critical. Failing to do so could result in thousands of dollars in fines or even out-of-service orders, which prevent drivers from operating commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) until issues are fixed.

However, remaining FMCSA compliant presents unique challenges, as roadside violations are often caused by a lack of driver accountability or failure to complete thorough pre-trip inspections. As such, it's vital for motor carriers to understand the importance of pre-trip inspections and train drivers on how to conduct them.

#### Pre-trip Inspections Explained

A pre-trip inspection is a type of vehicle inspection that takes place at the beginning of a driver's shift. Like any vehicle inspection, the purpose of this process is to identify any defects in a CMV's parts and accessories. Deficiencies must be addressed if they affect the safety of the vehicle's operation or have the potential to result in a mechanical breakdown. In other words, pre-trip inspections center around drivers ensuring CMVs are in safe operating condition before using them.

#### Training Drivers on Pre-trip Inspections

Drivers should be trained to assess various CMV components in pre-trip inspections. These include:

- Service breaks, including trailer brake connections
- Parking (hand) brakes
- Steering mechanisms
- Lighting devices and reflectors
- Tires

- Horns
- Windshield wipers
- Rear-vision mirrors
- Coupling devices
- Wheels and rims
- Emergency equipment

Pre-trip inspections should be conducted prior to CMV operation. If previous vehicle inspection reports note any deficiencies, drivers must review and sign this documentation to acknowledge and certify that the necessary repairs were made before CMV use. Drivers do not need to prepare written pre-trip inspection reports as they do for other vehicle inspections (i.e., post-trip inspections); they just need to be satisfied that CMVs are in safe operating condition, as long as there were no deficiencies reported beforehand.

#### Conclusion

Overall, pre-trip inspections play a major role in helping motor carriers protect their drivers, promote roadway safety, ensure FMCSA compliance and avoid costly penalties due to failed roadside inspections. By understanding the value of these inspections and training drivers on related best practices, motor carriers can minimize vehicle-related hazards and maintain successful operations.

For further commercial fleet resources and risk management guidance, contact us today.

