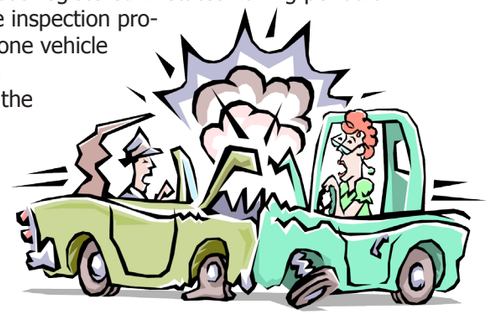
Motor vehicle safety inspections play an integral role in Missouri's traffic safety program and are making a significant contribution in reducing traffic crashes and the resulting fatalities, injuries, and property damage. Each year millions of vehicles are safety inspected in Missouri. These inspections are intended to detect mechanical and safety defects that, if left uncorrected, could cause or contribute to the cause of a traffic crash. Annual statistics indicate that 16 to 17 percent of the vehicles inspected are found to have one or more defects that are required to be corrected. The most numerous unsafe components are lights, brakes, exhaust system, and steering.

While a motor vehicle safety inspection is not meant to be a total vehicle tune-up, drivers should feel comfortable with the fact that the safety features of their vehicles are in proper working order, as are those of the many vehicles they meet while driving on Missouri's roadways. Annual studies conducted by the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Statistical Analysis Center show the motor vehicle safety inspection program does work.

MSHP Fatal Crash Analysis 2008 - 2010

According to The Missouri State Highway Patrol's Nationwide and Missouri Motor Vehicle Safety Inspection Program Fatal Crash Analysis, 2008 - 20010, Missouri's motor vehicle inspection program ranks as one of the best in the nation. "... For every 65.9 vehicles involved in **nationwide** fatal traffic crashes, one had a vehicle defect causation factor. Vehicles registered in the state of Missouri not only had proportionately fewer vehicle defects than all vehicles involved in fatal crashes, they had proportionately fewer vehicle defects than those registered in states having periodic motor vehicle inspection programs. Only one vehicle in every 88.5 registered in the state of Missouri had a vehicle defect as a fatal traffic crash causative factor."



Trends Affecting Vehicle Safety

Many of today's motor vehicle trends make it even more important to maintain a strong safety inspection program in Missouri.

1. Motor vehicles have become much more complex. The average person cannot perform needed mechanical and electrical maintenance on their own vehicles. Well trained technicians with sophisticated equipment are required to properly diagnose and repair modern vehicles.

2. Many vehicles are not receiving regular maintenance checks because of the increased number of self-service gasoline stations without garage and maintenance service. Rarely do motorists find a place where a mechanic will check the oil and tires on their vehicle while filling up the gas tank.

3. Because of high replacement costs, motorists tend to keep their vehicles longer. The older a vehicle becomes, the higher the risk of safety component failure.

4. The rise in the volume of traffic on the nation's roadways combined with the dramatic increase of vehicle miles traveled places additional strain on a motor vehicle's systems. This is compounded by the recent increase in speed limits that generate greater forces on vehicle components and contributes to their wear and failure rate.

How To Report Complaints

Citizens can report complaints on a motor vehicle safety inspection by calling the nearest Highway Patrol troop headquarters and asking for the Motor Vehicle Inspection Unit.

For the phone number of the Highway Patrol troop headquarters in your area, please consult your local phone directory.

Emergency Assistance

1-800-525-5555

or Cellular *55

Road Conditions

1-888-275-6636

Meth Hotline

1-888-823-METH (6384)

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Motor Vehicle Inspection

The Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division

Missouri's motor vehicle safety inspection program is overseen by the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Licensing and monitoring inspector/mechanics and inspection stations are just two of the duties of the Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division. Members of this division train and test inspector/mechanics to ensure proper inspections. This division also fields complaints from citizens who believe they have received an improper or incomplete inspection. Every complaint received by the Patrol is investigated, and appropriate action is taken to correct the problem. Citizens can report complaints on an inspection by calling the nearest Highway Patrol troop headquarters and asking for the Motor Vehicle Inspection Unit.

Division personnel also assist traffic accident investigators and prosecuting attorneys with evidence and testimony regarding the condition of motor vehicle components that may have been a contributing factor of a fatal or serious traffic crash.

In addition to monitoring and regulating the state's motor vehicle safety inspection program, members of the Motor Vehicle Inspection Division also manage the sale and exchange of inspection stickers and decals, perform VIN (vehicle identification number) verifications and salvage title inspections, and perform school bus inspections.

Protecting The Buyer

Perhaps the most unheralded aspect of motor vehicle safety inspection is the consumer protection provided by the law's requirement placing responsibility on the "seller" to have the vehicle inspected prior to sale. The Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division investigates many complaints each year regarding defective mechanical component parts on recently purchased vehicles. In addition, inspection requirements involve repair or replacement of parts prior to, during, or after a motor vehicle inspection, and these transactions also generate some complaints. In each of these situations, objective investigations of the complaints help the consumer and the businesses involved to resolve the issues of contention favorably. In many cases, consumers have saved hundreds of dollars and, in some instances, thousands of dollars in repair costs or a loss in the value of a vehicle.

Deterring Auto Theft

The Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division also administers the statewide VIN/Salvage Title Inspection program. The purpose of the program is to prevent stolen vehicles from being titled and stolen parts from being used in rebuilding wrecked motor vehicles. Motor vehicle inspectors also assist the public in correcting various minor title errors, such as simple number transpositions. They can provide VIN verification on boats (although this is typically handled by the Marine Operations Troopers of the Missouri State Highway Patrol).

Items To Be Inspected

Inspector/mechanics are instructed in the proper procedures and regulations regarding items required to be inspected and are tested to ensure their knowledge. These procedures are to be followed completely each time a vehicle is presented for a safety inspection. The inspector/mechanic must drive the vehicle on the station premises to inspect brake performance or utilize an approved computerized brake testing machine; raise the hood of the vehicle; raise the vehicle on a lift or with a jack; and for most vehicles, remove at least one wheel for the brake components inspection.

The following items are required to be inspected: steering wheel bind and play; brake pedal reserve; power brake reserve; brake warning light; windshield wiper operation and blade condition; mirrors; horn; high beam indicator; glass; front and rear lights; signaling devices; reflectors; entire fuel system including the filler cap; brake master cylinder; brake lines and hoses; brake components including pads or linings, drums or rotors, and internal brake mechanisms; power steering system including fluid level, drive belt, and hoses; air pollution control devices including the catalytic converter; tires and wheels; suspension and steering linkage including springs/torsion bar, shocks, wheel play, wheel bearings, tie rod ends, idler arm, pitman arm, stabilizer links, control arms, ball joints, struts, steering wheel, and column; exhaust system; bumpers; and seat belts.

Every inspection must be complete and proper before an inspector/mechanic may issue an approval certificate or rejection notice. If no defective items are found during the inspection, the vehicle will be approved and the inspector/mechanic will affix an inspection sticker. However, if defective items are located, the vehicle will be rejected and the defective items must be repaired or replaced. Vehicle owners are entitled to one reinspection without additional charge provided the vehicle is returned to the original inspection station within 20 consecutive days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and state holidays. The vehicle may be repaired at the inspection station after the vehicle owner is presented with a written estimate for repairs and signs an authorization. A rejected vehicle may be removed from the inspection station to be repaired by the owner or another place of the owner's choice.

Inspection stations are required to begin a safety inspection within two hours after a vehicle is presented, unless other inspections are being performed. A reinspection must begin within one hour. The maximum fee of $12 may be charged for a safety inspection. The maximum fee allowed for motorcycle inspections and homemade trailer verifications is $10.

Ensuring Our Children Are Safe On School Buses

State law requires all school bus owners have their buses inspected twice each year. The buses are inspected in late summer before school starts at the owner's garage, if licensed, or any public inspection station. Buses also must be inspected mid-year after February 1 by the Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division. Inspectors check 24 different categories of items on each bus ranging from air pollution and brakes to the tires and wipers. The mid-year inspection is free-of-charge to school districts and contractors.

Motor Vehicle Inspections Are A Success

Missouri's motor vehicle inspection program has worked well since its inception. Missouri has some of the safest highways in the nation when you consider the occurrence of fatal traffic crashes in which vehicle defects were a contributing factor, and the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division plays a major role in ensuring vehicles on Missouri's roadways, including the state's school buses, are safe to be operated in traffic. In addition to providing better safety on the roads, the program is working to improve public health by including air pollution control components in the safety inspection process. The Patrol's Motor Vehicle Inspection Division is an efficient and effective partner in the state's traffic safety program.