

Safety Bulletin

Don't Let Brake Problems Keep Your Truck Out of Service

If you fail to check your truck's brakes, you could be making a costly mistake. Brake-related violations accounted for more than half (56.5%) of all out-of-service (OOS) vehicle violations during the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's (CVSA) 2017 International Roadcheck. That's close to an 11% increase over the prior year.

These three brake-related violations were the most common that put vehicles out-of-service:

- Brake systems – 26.9%
- Tires and wheels – 15.1%
- Brake adjustment – 14.5%



While doing a thorough brake check during your pre- or post-trip inspection takes time, it can save you from serious headaches down the road.

What Brake Inspectors Will Check

If you're selected for a Level I (North American Standard) Inspection, know that inspectors will check:

- Brake-system components for any loose or missing parts
- Air or hydraulic fluid leaks
- Worn linings, pads, drums or rotors
- Faulty brake-system components
- Faulty indicator lamps for ABS and/or low-air-pressure warning devices
- Pushrod stroke (to determine whether your brakes are properly adjusted)

Four Ways to Keep Your Truck's Brakes in Tip-Top Shape

You likely won't know when a roadside inspection will happen, so doing routine inspections and keeping up on preventive maintenance are the best ways to make sure your truck doesn't go OOS.

Take these four steps to increase your chances of passing a roadside brake inspection:

- 1. Listen carefully** - That familiar hissing noise is often a sure sign that something isn't right with your truck's brakes. To test your air brake, set it for 90-100 psi, then walk around the vehicle and listen for any audible leaks.
- 2. Check the dashboard** – If your truck has antilock brakes (ABS), turn the ignition on and make sure the ABS dashboard lamp lights up. Also, pump the foot valve to about 55 psi to make sure your low-air-pressure warning device functions properly.
- 3. Measure brake stroke length** – With your brakes at 90-100 psi, release the brakes. Measure from the base of the chamber to the center of the clevis pin on the slack adjuster using a tape measure. Then apply the brakes and measure again from the same spot. Make sure your stroke length is within the maximum allowable limit for the particular air brake chamber on your truck.
- 4. Check all brake lines, pads, drums or rotors** - Make sure there are no kinks or tears in the lines, check for any signs of damage to your brakes, and ensure pads and rotors meet minimum thickness requirements.