

7 Pre- and Post-Trip Inspection Essentials

When done properly, a good pre-trip inspection will help you avoid mechanical breakdowns. A thorough post-trip inspection, meanwhile, will help you identify any wear-and-tear so you can notify your carrier and get any concerns addressed before your next run.

Yet even the most seasoned truck drivers sometimes miss a potential problem with their truck. Don't let it happen to you. Use these seven essentials to up your pre- and post-trip inspection game.

- 1. Take enough time.** On the highway, speed kills. During a pre- or post-trip inspection, speed leads to mistakes. Budget at least 30 minutes for your pre- and post-trip inspections. Use a checklist to ensure you review all important areas, including your truck's general condition, engine, fluid levels, gauges and controls, lights, belts, wires, and the brakes on both your truck and trailer.
- 2. Set a routine.** The way you do an inspection may be as important as what you check. Develop a routine for which areas you check first, and which you do later. One tip: Start on the front-left, then continue to the front, right side, rear, left rear, left side and coupling system.
- 3. Don't make excuses.** Nobody likes standing in a summer downpour or walking around outside on a 100-plus degree scorcher. But don't let the weather stop you from inspecting your rig thoroughly.
- 4. Keep things clean.** Things like fast-food wrappers in your cab or a dirty windshield may not be on your inspection checklist, but they're important, too. If you're chosen for an unannounced inspection, an inspector may see a dirty cab as a sign that you don't care for your rig properly.



- 5. Don't forget the tires.** Check to be sure they're fully inflated and maintain the proper tread depth. Also, make sure all lug nuts are tight.
- 6. Don't forget the cargo.** If you are hauling a non-sealed trailer, check your cargo and make sure nothing will shift (or shifted) during your run.
- 7. Review your paperwork.** Keep your log (electronic or paper) up to date, and make sure other paperwork (driver's license, inspection, insurance) is current.

Remember, pre-trip inspections are required by law, and most carriers require drivers to file a post-trip driver vehicle inspection report. Proper pre- and post-trip inspections will keep you from going out of service, take the stress out of any weigh-station visits or unannounced inspections, and will protect both you and other drivers on the road from harm.