

Pretrip Inspection

Motor carriers and their drivers must ensure that their commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) and/or intermodal equipment are safe before driving.

Scope

These requirements apply to CMVs and intermodal equipment operated in interstate commerce.

Regulatory citation

[49 CFR 392.7](#) — *Equipment, inspection, and use*

[49 CFR 392.8](#) — *Emergency equipment, inspection, and use*

[49 CFR 392.9](#) — *Inspection of cargo, cargo securement devices and systems*

[49 CFR 396.13](#) — *Driver inspection*

[49 CFR 396.15](#) — *Driveaway-towaway operations and inspections*

Key definitions

Commercial motor vehicle (CMV): A self-propelled or towed motor vehicle used on a highway, in interstate commerce, that meets any one of the following criteria:

- Has a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) or gross combination weight rating (GCWR), or gross vehicle weight (GVW) or gross combination weight (GCW), of 10,001 pounds or more, whichever is greater; or
- Is designed or used to transport more than 8 passengers (including the driver) for compensation; or
- Is designed or used to transport more than 15 passengers (including the driver), and not used to transport passengers for compensation; or
- Is transporting hazardous materials of a type or quantity which requires placarding.

Driveaway-towaway operation: An operation in which an empty or unladen motor vehicle with one or more sets of wheels on the surface of the roadway is being transported:

- Between vehicle manufacturer's facilities;
- Between a vehicle manufacturer and a dealership or purchaser;
- Between a dealership, or other entity selling or leasing the vehicle, and a purchaser or lessee;
- To a motor carrier's terminal or repair facility for the repair of disabling damage following a crash; or

- To a motor carrier's terminal or repair facility for repairs associated with the failure of a vehicle component or system; or
- By means of a saddle-mount or tow-bar.

Intermodal equipment: Trailing equipment (usually container chassis) that is used in the intermodal transportation of intermodal cargo containers over public highways.

Summary of requirements

Before operating a CMV (at any time), the driver must be satisfied that the following parts and accessories are in good working order:

- Service brakes, including trailer brake connections,
- Parking (hand) brakes,
- Steering mechanism,
- Lighting devices and reflectors,
- Tires,
- Horn,
- Windshield wiper or wipers,
- Rear-vision mirror or mirrors,
- Coupling devices,
- Wheels and rims, and
- Emergency equipment (fire extinguisher(s), spare fuses, and warning devices).

In addition, a driver may not drive a CMV unless:

- The cargo is properly distributed and secured;
- The tailgate, tailboard, doors, tarps, spare tire, cargo securement devices, and other equipment are secured; and
- Cargo or other objects are not obscuring the driver's view ahead or to the right or left sides, interfering with the driver's ability to freely move his or her arms and legs, hindering access to emergency equipment, or preventing anyone from easily exiting the cab or driver's compartment.

The regulations do not specifically require a pretrip inspection, nor an inspection report, but an inspection is widely seen as the only way to ensure a vehicle's safety before driving. In addition, company policies may require a pretrip inspection and report, and may specify a minimum amount of time for each inspection.

If the last person who drove the vehicle prepared a driver's vehicle inspection report (DVIR) indicating that the vehicle had a defect, the next driver must review and sign the DVIR before driving, to acknowledge that required repairs were completed. (No signature is required for defects that were on a trailer that is no longer a part of the combination.)

For **intermodal equipment**, a driver preparing to transport the equipment must inspect the following parts and accessories and be sure they are in good working order before the equipment is operated over the road:

- Service brake components that the driver can easily see when performing a thorough visual inspection without physically going under the vehicle, and trailer brake connections;
- Lighting devices, lamps, markers, and conspicuity marking material;
- Wheels, rims, lugs, tires;
- Air line connections, hoses, and couplers;
- King pin upper coupling device;
- Rails or support frames;
- Tie down bolsters;
- Locking pins, clevises, clamps, or hooks; and
- Sliders or sliding frame lock.

There is no specific documentation required for this inspection.

Before operating a combination vehicle in a **driveaway-towaway operation**, the motor carrier must ensure that:

- The tow-bar or saddle-mount connections are properly secured to the towed and towing vehicle;
- The connections function properly, without cramping or binding; and
- The towed motor vehicle follows substantially in the path of the towing vehicle without whipping or swerving.