

Heavy Commercial Vehicle

Daily walk around checks information

There are approximately **three million vehicles** in the national fleet in Ireland. As vehicles age they are subject to wear and tear and if this is not picked up and repaired at regular intervals it will eventually result in unsafe vehicles and breakdowns. Roadside checks conducted by RSA Vehicle Inspectors have found that on average up to 50% of vehicles had defects. Most defects that occur on vehicles are maintenance related and are therefore preventable.

What the law requires

Road Traffic legislation requires that vehicles are maintained in a roadworthy condition and safe when in use on a public road. So whether you own, lease, hire or borrow a vehicle for work purposes, you must make sure that it is safe for use and fit for the purpose for which it is intended.

Under Health and Safety Legislation, a vehicle is a place of work. The law requires that workplaces are maintained in a condition that is safe and without risk to safety and health. Vehicles must be kept safe and fit for purpose and the driver must be able to get in and out of the vehicle safely. Employers must make sure that drivers are familiar with the vehicle they are driving and that they have been given appropriate instruction, information and training to carry out required pre-checks in the correct and safe manner.

Employers must also make sure that they have a defect reporting system in place so that when defects are found that they are put right. Drivers should never be made to drive under conditions that are unsafe or that do not comply with the law.

Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness legislation requires vehicle owners/operators to submit commercial vehicles for roadworthiness testing at the CVRT network on time. When a vehicle passes

the test, a disc will be issued and the owner/operator must make sure that this disc is displayed at all times when the vehicle is in use in a public place.

Some of the common faults detected by RSA vehicle inspectors during roadside checks include braking defects, damaged wheels and tyres, faulty lights, leakages and visible suspension and chassis defects. The majority of these faults could have been found and fixed if the driver had conducted a walk around check before use.

Drivers must be trained to carry it out, and when doing so record the details of any vehicle defects that could affect vehicle safety and the safety of others. These must be reported to the operator and fixed before the vehicle is used. The advantage of this approach is that it lowers the chances of breakdown or being delayed at a roadside check. It also improves the reliability of the service delivered to customers and journeys are more likely to be completed safely and on time.

The business benefits

The price of correcting unexpected vehicle failure is always higher than the cost of preventing that failure in the first place.

Well maintained vehicles give both business and safety benefits. Vehicles that are well maintained and regularly checked have the following business benefits:

- more reliable
- cheaper to run
- more fuel efficient
- likely to have higher residual value.
- Less likely to break down
- more likely to have longer life span

Safety benefits include:

- improved driver safety
- safer driver working environment (workplace)
- less collisions
- fewer injuries to the driver, passengers, co-workers and ~~the~~ road users.

Preventative Maintenance

All employers, fleet operators and owner drivers are required by law to have a vehicle preventative maintenance system in place. The aim of the system is to maintain a high standard of roadworthiness and identify any vehicle defects, damage or problems at an early stage before they become a safety issue or a major cost. Regular planned vehicle maintenance will make sure that vehicles are maintained on a year round basis and not just prepared once a year for their annual roadworthiness tests.

This system should include two types of inspection;

1. daily vehicle walk around checks which are carried out by drivers, and
2. preventative maintenance checks which must be carried out by suitably qualified personnel.

Vehicle walk around checks are a crucial part of any vehicle preventative maintenance system. The driver is often the first person to notice that there is a problem and it is far easier to fix a problem in a premises rather than out on the road. Doing vehicle walk around checks must be incorporated into drivers' daily work routines. Every driver should carry out a check before they start their first journey in the vehicle each day. Where more than one driver is using a vehicle in a day, the second driver should conduct the same check before they use the vehicle.

It is recommended that employers prepare their own vehicle checklist for drivers, to take account of the

vehicle type and how the vehicle is used.

When conducting walk around checks, it is important for drivers to follow a routine so that they don't miss any items. They should also wear high visibility clothing and look out for other vehicles. People being hit or run over by vehicles is the main cause of workplace vehicle deaths.

Any defects found should be recorded and reported to the employer or the responsible person so that appropriate action can be taken. Any safety critical defects must be fixed before the vehicle is used on the road.

Vehicle owners/operators must also make sure that vehicles in their fleets regularly undergo routine preventative maintenance inspections taking account of vehicle condition, age, and mileage, etc. These are more detailed inspections, and must be carried out by Suitably Qualified Individuals. The results must be recorded (including details of any repairs carried out) and kept for 2 years from the date of record creation.

How to carry out a walk around check

It is suggested that the vehicle is checked in one direction covering the following main items:

- Lights, windows and mirrors
- Tyres
- Lights
- Fluids
- Instruments
- Vehicle cab

Check that the vehicle is sitting square and not leaning to one side. Switch on the hazard lights to show that there is someone working around the vehicle and that the lights are working. Check that the driver's mirrors are clean, secure and not damaged.

Check that wheels are in good condition, with no cracks or damage and that they are secure.

Is there any damage to the tyres such as bulges, cracks, cuts or tears? Are they correctly inflated with appropriate tread depth? Tyres should have sufficient tread and should not be worn to the extent that the tread indicator contacts the road surface. Check tread depth with a simple gauge. The legal minimum tyre tread depth for vehicles is 1.6mm but tyres should be replaced before this minimum depth is reached. Refer to the manufacturer's handbook for specific information about obtaining best performance from your vehicle.

Is the exhaust secure? Make sure that the fuel tank cap is securely in place and that the cap seal is in good condition and is not leaking. Walk around the vehicle in one direction and check that all required lights, reflectors and markings are fitted, clean and in good condition. Check the vehicle bodywork and wings for damage. Make sure that body panels are secure and not liable to fall off and create a hazard for other road users and that the bodywork has no sharp edges.

If the vehicle has a tail - lift, is it in good condition and operating correctly? Is it safely locked in position for travel? Employers, remember the tail lift should be thoroughly examined by a competent person once a year.

Make sure that the number plates are fitted in the correct position, clean and that the registration is clearly visible and appropriately lit.

Are loading doors secure and in good condition?

If carrying a load check that it is adequately secured, unlikely to move, that the vehicle is not overloaded. Check the manufacturer's guidelines for maximum load capacity for the vehicle. Check the load restraints for damage, wear and tear such as fraying straps, cuts or tears, and replace as necessary.

For overhanging loads, make sure that the load does

not protrude more than 3 metres beyond the rearmost point of the body of the vehicle and that all loads with an overhang exceeding 1 metre are marked with an appropriate and visible flag to warn other road users.

Where a trailer is in use, the registration number of the vehicle must be displayed at the rear of the trailer. Check that the trailer coupling is secure and that the electrics are connected, and the lights and indicators are working.

Make sure that all vehicle access is in good condition, clean and secure, including steps. Check that there is nothing present that could cause someone to slip or trip when getting into or out of the vehicle. Good housekeeping is essential.

Check the door and mirrors on the passenger side. Check the windscreen washer reservoir cap to make sure it is secure. Lift the bonnet and check the engine fluid levels. Engine fluid levels should be between the minimum and maximum marks. Look underneath the vehicle for any signs of fluid leaks such as oil or coolant. Check the wipers for wear.

Check that valid tax, insurance and roadworthiness (CVRT) discs are displayed correctly on the windscreen.

Make sure that the seat and steering wheel are set for comfort, posture and safety and that all controls can be easily reached. Check your driving lights.

Check that there is good visibility through all windows and mirrors and that there are no cracks or damage. For example, is vision obstructed by any stickers or pendants? Check that the cab interior is clean and that there are no loose items which could cause you injury if vehicle had to brake in an emergency. Check that the windscreen washer operates, the jets are aimed correctly and that the washer bottle level warning light is not showing.

Check that the wipers work correctly and that the mirrors are all correctly aligned and the heater element operates. Do the demister, cab heater, interior lights and horn all operate correctly?

Check that all instruments, gauges and warning devices are operating correctly and following their correct sequence, including the tachograph [if required], the ABS and EBS in cab warning lights. If any warning lights remain on after start up, record them on the checklist and report them as a defect for repair.

Apply the foot brake, release the parking brake and check that this is working correctly. Is there excessive smoke or noise from the exhaust?

Before driving off, check that the steering and brakes are working correctly.

Continue to monitor the vehicle's roadworthiness as it is being driven. Check that the speedometer is working and can be seen from the driving position. If applicable, check that the tachograph is working. Make sure that the ABS or EBS lights do not remain on after their check sequence is complete.

Recording of Defects

If you spot a defect, seek advice from a suitably qualified person and do not use the vehicle unless it is safe to do so.

Vehicles posing a danger to the driver or other road users must not be used until the identified defects are repaired

Record and report any defects in line with employer's defect reporting systems. Any safety critical items must be repaired or the vehicle must be taken out of service. Records of all checks, repairs and services should be kept for the vehicle. Analysis of the records may highlight a pattern or history to the vehicle, re-occurring defects or poor maintenance repair standards.

In summary

You must build a few simple steps into your vehicle maintenance systems. This includes carrying out daily walk around checks and preventative maintenance inspections by suitably qualified personnel at appropriate intervals, bearing in mind the vehicle's condition, age, and mileage. Make sure you take your Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) on time and review your maintenance system regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Further information

The Health and Safety Authority, the Road Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána have developed a series of resources to help employers learn more about and manage vehicle risks. They include vehicle walk-around check posters, check lists and instructional videos.

The vehicle checks resources can be downloaded from the following websites:

1. [HCV Driver Walk around Checks poster](#)
2. [HCV Driver Walk around Checklist](#)
3. www.rsa.ie
4. www.cvrt.ie
5. www.hsa.ie/vehiclesatwork
6. www.drivingforwork.ie

Do not take unnecessary chances with your vehicle(s)

Check it

Fix it

Do not ignore it