

15 Minute Manager

Pre- and Post-Inspections

Vehicle safety inspections are critical to your program's ability to transport passengers to their destination and do so in a safe manner. Pre-trip inspections are designed to prevent putting passengers at risk and assuring that maintenance and repairs are done in a timely manner, thus reducing the time a vehicle is out of service or incurs more costly repairs because it was not adequately maintained. Post-trip inspections allow the driver to make note of concerns that may have arisen during the vehicle's use and to alert the next driver to any possible issues that may arise.

Pre and post inspections:

- Help assure safety for passengers, drivers, and other vehicles/pedestrians on the road.
- Reduce risk for potential, costly liability
- Reduce costly repair requirements (maintenance is often less costly than repair and the required match funding for repairs is significantly more than it is for maintenance as maintenance can be capitalized).
- Documents failures or problems so that the life expectancy of a vehicle can be better determined and a replacement vehicle ordered in a timely manner.

Every transit program is to have a check-list for pre and post inspections and provide training to drivers on how to conduct these inspections. Failure to conduct thorough pre and post inspections is one of the most often cited failures in many transportation programs. Short-cuts, boredom, schedule (running late to start or anxious to clock out) and lack of familiarity with the procedures all lead to these failures. It is up to the Transit Manager to make sure that drivers are trained and that they carry out a thorough inspection. Motivating drivers to do so is a major challenge, therefore; safety must be held at the highest level of priority across departments and down the ranks from leadership to drivers.

If management makes safety a recurring priority, with consistent messaging, and follow-through to verify compliance, so too will drivers.

In addition to the pre and post inspection training that new drivers must receive, it is imperative that every driver (and temporary replacement) also be evaluated on their ability to adequately perform these inspections. A full, hands-on training where you conduct an inspection is best. It also may be useful to conduct a test to measure each driver's comprehension. A good test will not only provide an opportunity for drivers to show knowledge on paper, it will also include a practical test that ascertains a driver's ability to conduct an actual inspection and to find failures or concerns that you have placed for them to find.

Be sure to review your inspection forms prior to the training and make any changes to your forms that will meet your needs. (See sample forms and the RTAP Vehicle Safety guide.) Be aware of requirements that may be difficult to carry out and, therefore, avoided i.e., checking springs or the under carriage.

The training can be used to introduce new policy or procedure. Post-trip inspection forms may be the same as pre-trip inspection forms but keep in mind that employees will wonder why they must do a post-trip inspection when the next driver is about to do the same pre-trip inspection. Additionally, safety defects should have been reported during the shift. Post-trip inspection forms may provide an opportunity for one driver to alert the next to any potential or emerging issues and to alert mechanics as to non-critical or emerging maintenance requests (wipers, washer fluid levels, etc.).

It also will be important that drivers are routinely checked to make sure they are thorough. You can do this by placing notes in various places that must be checked that directs the driver to place a code on the checklist to show they found the note or require drivers take pictures using cell phone of key inspection points and submit them to the dispatcher via text prior to departing. Drivers should be made aware that you will be doing this on a regular basis and that their performance evaluation includes their compliance with pre and post-trip inspection protocols.

This brief 15-minute manager training is to remind drivers what is expected. If drivers have been hired and not received a thorough training on conducting inspections, that training must be completed separately as this overview is not sufficient to fulfill that training requirement.

You might also consider breaking up this topic into three or four 15 minute segments. You can go over the requirements in one, then go to a vehicle for subsequent training events. One could be inspection of exterior, one for interior, and another for ADA equipment. In this way, drivers receive a thorough and comprehensive hands on training.

15 Minute Manager – Pre- and Post-trip Inspections

The Federal Transit Authority and the Arizona Department of Transportation require that all vehicles be safety inspected by drivers prior to each shift in which the vehicle will transport passengers. Additionally, post-trip inspections must be completed at the end of each shift.

Documentation must be made and any failure or concern noted on provided forms. Any failure or concern must also be reported verbally to the identified contact person in your organization. If a failure or concern is determined to be a safety hazard, the vehicle will be taken out of service until repairs can be made.

Vehicles with failed lifts or ramps may only remain in service if there is no spare. Failures must be resolved in 3-5 days depending on population.

Ask employees to share their method for conducting a pre- post-trip inspection. Listen to each person without comment on its appropriateness.

Hand out your pre-trip inspection policies and forms and the RTAP SMART Vehicle Safety Training Guide to each employee at the training. This includes non-drivers as everyone should be aware of the requirements and work together to suggest changes or procedures that will make pre- and post-trip inspections effective.

Have employees flip through the handout to see that the inspection criteria are significant and important. Return to page 3 of the handout and review the Four Components to an inspection:

- 1 The Approach – assess as you approach the vehicle. Determine if it's leaning to one side, check for damage, check exhaust and look for oil or fluid leaks under the carriage.
- 2 Under the Hood – Check engine fluids (oil, washer fluid, antifreeze, battery, etc.) and components (belts and hoses). See complete list on pages 3 and 4 of the Guide.
- 3 The Walk Around – Circle the outside of the vehicle. Start the vehicle, make sure it's in park, and set the parking brake. Turn on all the lights, the flashers, and the heater or AC. Honk the horn and turn on the windshield washer and wipers. Start from the front door and walk counter clockwise, checking all the items on the checklist on pages 5 and 6 of the Guide.
- 4 On Board – Inspect on-board areas, equipment, and supplies including the passenger seating area, the driver's area, lights, mirrors, brakes, stairwell, lift and lift door, and wheelchair securements. See pages 7 and 8 for a detailed checklist of items to inspect.

Remind employees that their safety awareness does not end with the inspection. In-route inspections include using your senses:

- Visually monitoring of gauges and for smoke, steam and wear;
- Visually monitoring for smoke, steam, and wear;
- Listening for knocks and other noises that would indicated trouble;

- Being aware of unusual odors like fumes, fuel, burning oil or rubber, brakes and hot electrical wires; and
- Feeling excessive vibrations, shimmies, and wandering or hard steering.

Hand out Post-trip inspection policies and forms and discuss their use.

Ask employees to review your pre- post-inspection forms. Review the necessity for completion and discuss how the information is used by the agency. Remind them of the need to make sure lifts and ramps are tested routinely.

Ask employees to suggest changes or additions to the inspection forms.

The cover page of your pre-and post-inspection policy should be a receipt stating that the employee has been given a copy and will read it. The employee will sign and date the receipts. Receipts will be collected and kept in training file and employee file.

Resources: RTAP [START Safety Training and Rural Transit \(Learner's Training Module\)](#)