

A. Lesson Goal:

By the end of this training session, workers will:

- Know how to inspect their vehicles for safe operation
- Know the basic safety steps they need to take for safer driving

B. OSHA Regulation:

General Duty Clause 5A.1. Forklifts come under 29 CFR 1910.178. DOT regulations might also apply in certain circumstances.

C. Have Handy:

- Ideally, this session should be held in a location where you can demonstrate a motor vehicle inspection. If you are not a motor vehicle expert, have a qualified person conduct the demonstration.
- Any inspection checklists used by your organization.

D. Background for Instructor:

1. Introduction

For millions of workers in North America, motor vehicles aren't just something they use to get to the job—they use them *on the job* as well. Many of us use cars and trucks every day for a variety of work-related reasons. Others drive more specialized vehicles, such as forklifts.

We all know that driving a motor vehicle can be dangerous, even life-threatening. After all, we're operating large, heavy metal containers with powerful engines, capable of hurtling us along at 55 miles per hour or more. But still we all tend to take motor vehicles for granted and assume that they're always safe to operate.

The fact is that not all motor vehicles are safe to drive, and not all drivers are able to operate motor vehicles safely. Vehicles—and drivers—who are not in proper condition to drive are one of the principal causes of accidents and injuries. For this reason, we all need to pay closer attention to motor vehicle safety *before* we start the engine.

2. Vehicle Safety Inspections

Conducting your own motor vehicle inspection is one of the best ways to prevent a breakdown or accident. Problems with a vehicle can come up at anytime, no matter how short the trip or familiar you are with it. A safety check only takes a minute or two—time well spent if it prevents a disaster.

You don't have to be a trained mechanic to perform a basic safety check of a motor vehicle. Here are the key things to check for:

- **Tires**—Look for tires that are flat or low on air. Ideally, use an air pressure gauge to make sure they're not over- or under-inflated. Check the tread to make sure the tires are not bald or wearing unevenly.
- **Lights**—Make sure all the lights are working properly: headlights (both high beams and low beams), taillights, turn signals, and back-up lights.
- **Wipers**—Make sure they're operating correctly and that the blades fit properly and aren't so worn that they leave streaks on the windshield. Make sure the windshield washer works, too, and that you have plenty of fluid.

- **Engine and Radiator Fluids**—Low levels of oil and antifreeze/coolant can lead to a breakdown or worse. Check these fluid levels before you get started.
- **Belts and Hoses**—See that they're not worn out and that they're adjusted properly.
- **Loads**—If your vehicle is carrying a heavy load, make sure the load is not too heavy for the vehicle's rated capacity. A heavy load can make a vehicle difficult to stop or maneuver safely. Make sure the load is on securely and isn't blocking your rear vision.

Checklists—If your organization has an inspection checklist, make sure you use it. Vehicles like forklifts have extensive pre-use inspections that must be performed.

After you've gotten out on the road, stay alert for indications that the vehicle isn't running properly. Unusual noises and smells from the engine or underneath the car mean something is wrong. So do soft, squealing, or grinding brakes. Remember, if something seems wrong with the vehicle, it probably is wrong. Don't ignore it—get off the road and have it checked out as soon as you can.

3. Drivers Should Be Safety Checked, Too

Just as motor vehicles should be inspected for safety, drivers should learn to do a quick safety check on *themselves* before they get behind the wheel. This is because driver error and impairment is probably the leading cause of accidents, injuries, and fatalities on the road. Here are some of the conditions you should check for yourself before you drive:

- **Fatigued**—A driver who is too tired to drive simply shouldn't drive until he or she is properly rested—it's too dangerous to yourself and to others on the road. If you do get sleepy while driving, pull over and take a nap.
- **Angry or Emotional**—Drivers who are distracted by anger or personal problems are likely to lose some of their good judgment, common sense, and ability to respond. Cool down before you start up.
- **Unfamiliar with Vehicle**—If you've only driven a compact car with automatic transmission, you may not be comfortable driving a truck with a standard shift. If that's the case, admit it—ask for training on an unfamiliar vehicle before endangering yourself and others.
- **Under the Influence**—It should go without saying that no one should drive when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Read labels of prescription and over-the-counter drugs for warnings.

4. Conclusion

A motor vehicle is not a toy—used improperly, it can be a dangerous and even deadly object. When you're on the road, you can't always control what another driver does, so it's doubly important to do what you can to reduce the risk of accidents. That means making sure that both the vehicle and the driver are in the best possible condition for the safest possible ride.

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E. Examples and Practical Exercises:

- Demonstrate how to inspect various parts of the vehicle: tires, lights, wipers, fluids, belts, hoses, etc.
- Have volunteers practice inspecting parts that may be less familiar (such as hoses and belts).