



- Frequently Asked Questions - **Emissions and Safety Inspection Program Information and Updates**

BACKGROUND

- In 2002, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) and the Clean Air Council initiated two lawsuits over the Commonwealth's slow progress in implementing autoemissions inspection procedures mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- In May 2003, PENNDOT and DEP announced an agreement to settle these lawsuits over Pennsylvania's program for automobile emissions testing. The changes called for in this agreement bring the state's emissions testing program into compliance with federal air quality standards while having a minimal effect on most of the state's drivers.
- The programs in the agreement rely heavily on the "on-board diagnostic" (OBD) systems present in cars manufactured since 1996. This technology allows a technician to attach a cable to a car's on-board computer and download information that helps them diagnose common engine problems that lead to increased pollution.
- Emissions inspections for subject vehicles are required once a year in conjunction with the annual safety inspection. Emissions inspections can be done at any participating private garage or dealer that is certified to perform emissions inspections.
- The fees for emissions and safety inspections will continue to be market driven. Competition permits customers to choose inspection sites based on price, service and convenience.

TYPES OF EMISSIONS INSPECTIONS

On-Board Diagnostics (OBD) Check

What are On-Board Diagnostics (OBD)?

OBD is an on-board system comprised of a computer with diagnostic software and sensors. The OBD system monitors the performance of the ignition, fuel metering and emissions systems, including the sensors and the computer itself, while the vehicle is being driven to insure they are working "as designed." The on-board computer can identify a problem well before the driver may recognize symptoms. The computer will

illuminate a light on the dash to notify the driver of a problem. Most dash lights will display a "Check Engine," "Service Engine Soon," or an engine symbol. When the OBD system detects a problem, a diagnostic trouble code is stored in the vehicle's computer. When a vehicle is brought in for an official OBD I/M Check, those trouble codes will help a technician properly diagnose and, if necessary, repair the problem. The OBD I/M Check can be performed on most 1996 and newer model-year gasoline-powered passenger vehicles, vans and light-duty trucks weighing 8,500 pounds and less, since these vehicles were required by the EPA to be manufactured with OBD systems.

How is an OBD I/M Check performed?

A certified technician will attach a cable to the vehicle's on-board computer through a data link connector (DLC), usually found under the dashboard, and download information to a computer to access how well the vehicle's emissions system is functioning. The vehicle's on-board computer will generate diagnostic trouble codes (DTC's) if there are malfunctions or other problems present in the vehicle's emissions system.

Tailpipe Tests

What is a Tailpipe Test?

A Tailpipe Test uses a tailpipe probe to collect a sample of the exhaust and an emissions analyzer to measure pollutants while the engine is idling. The Tailpipe Test can be performed on many gasoline-powered passenger vehicles, vans, and light-duty trucks. Inspection requirements are based on each vehicle's model year, with an allowance for normal wear.

How is a Tailpipe Test performed?

First, a certified technician will verify that the vehicle's engine is running at operating temperature. Then, the technician will insert a probe into the tailpipe to capture a sample of the engine's exhaust. After approximately 30-45 seconds, the analyzer will determine if the vehicle is emitting excess pollutants based on the vehicle's model year.

Gas Cap Test

What is a Gas Cap Test?

A Gas Cap Test is a functional check that tests whether harmful evaporative emissions (fumes) are escaping from a vehicle's gas tank into the atmosphere.

How is a Gas Cap Test performed?

A certified technician will remove the gas cap and insert it into a device that will then apply pressure to the gas cap. The testing unit will verify that the gas cap holds pressure for a period of approximately 45 seconds and a determination will be made as to whether or not fumes are escaping.

Visual Anti-Tampering Check

What is a Visual Anti-Tampering Check?

The Visual Anti-Tampering Check is a visual inspection for the presence of emission control components that were installed on a vehicle by the manufacturer.

How is a Visual Anti-Tampering Check performed?

A certified technician will look for the presence of the following emission control devices:

- Catalytic converter,
- Exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) valve,
- Positive crankcase ventilation (PCV) valve,
- Fuel inlet restrictor,
- Air pump, and
- Evaporative control system components such as vapor canisters and lines.

The certified technician will also determine if these devices are properly connected and if they are the correct type for the vehicle being inspected. These components may be original vehicle equipment or an equivalent aftermarket replacement component meeting the same standards. Only those components (listed above) that were part of the original certified vehicle configuration are subject to this portion of the inspection. If a component was not originally on a vehicle at the time of manufacturer, it will pass inspection without it.

What constitutes tampering?

The rule of thumb when it comes to emissions systems is that any modification that changes the vehicle from a certified configuration to a non-certified configuration is considered tampering. This applies to both vehicle owners and repair facilities and is therefore a federal offense. Replacing a catalytic converter with a straight pipe is one traditional example of tampering. Likewise, overriding the OBD system using high-tech defeat devices, non-certified computer chips, etc., would also be considered tampering.

EMISSIONS INSPECTION CHANGES

South Central Region

(Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton, and York counties)

What type of emissions inspection are required in the South Central Region?

- Most 1996 and newer model-year vehicles are required to have an OBD I/M Check, and a Gas Cap Test performed annually.
- Most 1975-1995 model-year vehicles are required to have a Gas Cap Test and a Visual Anti-Tampering Check performed annually.

Northern Region

(Blair, Cambria, Centre, Erie, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming and Mercer counties)

What type of emissions inspection are required in the Northern Region?

- Most 1975 and newer model-year vehicles are required to have a Gas Cap Test and a Visual Anti-Tampering Check performed annually.

Pittsburgh Region

(Allegheny, Beaver, Washington, and Westmoreland counties)

What type of emissions inspection are required in the Pittsburgh Region?

- Most 1996 and newer model-year vehicles are required to have an OBD I/M Check and a Gas Cap Test performed annually.
- Most 1975-1995 model-year vehicles continue to receive the annual emissions inspections required under the current program which includes: Tailpipe Tests, Gas Cap Tests and Visual Anti-Tampering Checks.

Philadelphia Region

(Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties)

What type of emissions inspection are required in the Philadelphia Region?

- Most 1996 and newer model-year vehicles are required to have an OBD I/M Check and a Gas Cap Test performed annually.
- Most 1975-1995 model-year vehicles continue to receive the annual emissions inspections required under the current program which include: Tailpipe Tests, Gas Cap Tests and Visual Anti-Tampering Checks.

Remaining 42 Non-Inspection/Maintenance (I/M)

Emissions Counties

(Adams, Armstrong, Bedford, Bradford, Butler, Cameron, Carbon, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Elk, Fayette, Forest, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lawrence, McKean, Mifflin, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Pike, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Wayne, and Wyoming counties)

What type of inspection is required in the remaining 42 Non-I/M Emissions Counties?

- These counties are not required to pass an emissions inspection. Rather, as part of the annual safety inspection, most passenger vehicles and light trucks weighing 11,000 pounds and less will be required to pass a Visual Anti-Tampering Check.

EMISSIONS INSPECTION QUESTIONS

When will motorists need to get their vehicle emissions inspected?

The emissions inspection is required annually for all subject vehicles in conjunction with the annual safety inspection. A vehicle must get an emissions inspection or exemption

before a safety inspection can be completed and a sticker issued.

How can I find an emissions inspection station?

For a complete list of emission inspection stations, visit the Drive Clean PA web site at www.drivecleanpa.state.pa.us. Motorists should shop around for the best price and convenience, just as is done for the safety inspection.

How will motorists know if an inspection station offers the emissions inspection?

Any inspection station that offers the emissions inspection is required to have an official inspection station sign outside the garage, clearly visible to the public. This sign will have a keystone design which is 24 inches high and 21 inches wide with a navy-blue background and gold letters. The station number plate will be hung below the keystone sign and will be green with white station numbers. This green number plate will indicate that the station offers emissions inspections. If the keystone sign has two number plates hung below it (one having a blue background with gold letters and the other having a green background with white letters) this designates the station as offering both safety and emissions inspections.

How will motorists know that an emissions inspection is required for their vehicle?

The message "Emissions Inspection Required/Diesel Vehicles Exempt" will be printed on the motorist's vehicle registration card to remind them that an emissions inspection is required for that vehicle.

I live in a county that requires an emissions inspection, but I lease my vehicle.

Am I required to participate in the emissions inspection program?

Yes. The address of the lessee (the person leasing the vehicle) reflects the county of registration and the message indicating the need to have an emissions test performed.

My company/business owns several vehicles, but they are housed in both emissions and non-emissions counties throughout Pennsylvania. Where are they required to get their emissions inspection?

Each vehicle should be inspected in the county it is registered in. But please note, if a vehicle is required to pass a specific type of emissions inspection (due to its registration) it can be inspected at an Official Emissions Inspection Station in another county if that station is certified to offer the type of emissions inspection that is required for your vehicle.

I recently moved to Pennsylvania from out-of-state. Is my out-of-state emissions inspection sticker valid in PA?

No. A vehicle newly registered in Pennsylvania must be emissions and safety inspected within ten (10) days of the registration date.

I just purchased a vehicle from an individual/dealer in a county that does not require emissions inspections, but I live in a county that requires emissions inspections. Do I need to get my vehicle emissions inspected in the county that I live in?

Yes. Your newly purchased vehicle must be inspected for emissions within ten days of the date of purchase.

I just moved from a county that does not require emissions inspections to a county that does require emissions inspections. When will I have to take my vehicle in for an emissions inspection?

You will need to take your vehicle in for an emissions inspection before your safety inspection expires. At that time, your vehicle will be required to get an emissions and safety inspection.

I just moved from a county that requires emissions inspections to a county that does not require emissions inspections. How do I get the emissions indicator message removed from my vehicle registration card?

If you no longer live in a county that requires an emissions inspection you must complete Form MV-63, "Change of Address for Driver's License, Photo ID and Vehicle Registration." A change of address can also be completed online at www.dmv.pa.gov. Once PennDOT processes and mails the new registration card to you the emissions indicator message will no longer appear.

What should I do if my vehicle registration card says "Emissions Inspection Required/Diesel Vehicles Exempt" but I do not live in a county that requires emissions inspections?

PENNDOT can issue corrected registration credentials for vehicle owners who live outside of an emissions-affected area but have the emission indicator on their registration in error. Vehicle owners should complete Form MV-421, "Emissions Inspection and Maintenance Program Verification" or contact the Vehicle Inspection Division at (717) 787-2895. Upon verification of home address and location by PENNDOT, a new registration card will be issued without the emissions indicator message.

I live in a county that requires emissions inspections. Can I go to an Official Emissions Inspection Station in another county to get the required emissions inspection for my vehicle?

Yes, if the Official Emissions Inspection Station in the other county is certified to offer the type of emissions inspection that is required for your vehicle.

What should I do if I am out of Pennsylvania when my emissions inspection expires?

Pennsylvania law allows vehicle owners who are outside the Commonwealth for more than 30 continuous days, to have their vehicle inspected within 10 days upon their return to Pennsylvania. It is recommended that you carry documentation (such as receipts) supporting your absence for the previous 30 days.

How much will these tests cost?

The fee for emissions inspections will continue to be market driven – like the safety inspection. Competition permits customers to choose inspection sites based on price,

service, and convenience.

Where will the Emissions Inspection sticker be placed?

The emissions sticker will be placed on the vehicle's front windshield next to the safety inspection sticker.

Are any vehicles exempt from Pennsylvania's emissions program?

Yes. Vehicles will be exempt from the program if:

- The vehicle has been owned for one year and driven less than 5,000 miles in the prior year. However, motorists must go to an emissions inspection station to verify the vehicle's mileage and receive an exemption sticker. Motorists can do this when they get their safety inspection if the station performs both types of inspections.
- The vehicle is a new car, not previously titled and has less than 5,000 miles before registration; motorists should receive an exemption sticker valid for up to 12 months upon receipt of the new car from your new car dealer.

Exemptions are determined by a certified emissions inspector.

Will motorists still need an emissions inspection sticker if their vehicle is exempt from the emissions inspection program?

Yes. Even if the vehicle is exempt from the emissions inspection program motorists will still need to go to an inspection station to receive an exemption sticker for the vehicle. The station can charge a fee to issue an exemption sticker.

Are any vehicles excluded from Pennsylvania's emissions program?

Yes. Vehicles will be excluded from the program if:

- the vehicle is registered as a street rod, classic, collectible, antique or specially constructed vehicle and motorcycles.

Vehicles excluded from the program will not have the "Emissions Inspection Required/Diesel Vehicles Exempt" message in their registration card.

Will motorists still need an emissions inspection sticker if their vehicle is excluded from the emissions inspection program?

No. If the vehicle is excluded from the program, no emissions message will appear on the registration card and as a result, no sticker is needed.

How will I know if my vehicle passed or failed the emissions inspection?

You will receive a computer-generated report which lists inspection results. A computer-generated report for a vehicle that fails the inspection will also include information on the cause of the failure. This information is provided to help the person repairing your vehicle. In addition to the computer-generated report, a passing vehicle will also have an emissions sticker affixed to its windshield.

What happens if a vehicle fails the emissions inspection?

If a vehicle doesn't pass the emissions inspection, you must make emissions-related repairs. After these repairs are made, the vehicle can be re-inspected for free, within 30 calendar days, at the station that initially conducted the inspection. If you wait longer than 30 days, or take the vehicle to a different emissions inspection station, the re-inspection is not free. In addition, if the vehicle still doesn't pass the inspection, in most cases you can get a one-year waiver if you have spent a minimum of \$450 on emissions-related repairs. In some cases, you may be required to spend more if the needed repair is the only repair that will address the problem.

If repairs are necessary, who is authorized to perform them?

Any recognized vehicle repair location, or individual, may perform emissions-related repairs. However, only a certified repair technician at a certified emissions inspection station may issue a waiver.

What is the difference between a certified inspection technician and a certified repair technician?

A certified inspection technician can inspect vehicles. Only certified repair technicians are permitted to issue waivers.

What is a waiver?

A certified emissions inspection station with a certified repair technician on staff may issue a waiver for a vehicle that does not pass an emissions inspection after the vehicle owner has made a minimum of \$450 worth of emissions-related repairs. A waiver is valid for one year. Waivers will not be issued to vehicles that do not pass the Visual Anti-Tampering Check.

What costs count towards the waiver?

Costs which count toward the waiver amount include:

- Diagnosis fees
- Parts installed and labor performed at a recognized repair location
- Costs of parts installed by vehicle owner/operator.

Waivers will not be issued to vehicles that do not pass the Visual Anti-Tampering Check.

If my vehicle fails the Visual Anti-Tampering portion of the emissions inspection and I can no longer purchase a replacement part, what happens next?

Vehicles with emission control devices which are obsolete and cannot be obtained through the original equipment manufacturer, aftermarket manufacturers or suppliers of used parts may be exempt from having to have the missing item of equipment replaced provided the customer provides proof of the unavailability of the component(s) as specified by PENNDOT.

Are emissions repairs covered by my vehicle's warranty?

If you have questions about the emissions warranty on your vehicle or need help in filing a warranty claim, contact your local car dealer or the manufacturer's zone or regional representative listed in your owner's manual or warranty booklet.

What happens if I am required to have an emissions inspection, but never do so?

If you are required but don't get your vehicle emissions inspected, you may not drive your vehicle on Pennsylvania highways. If you do, you are subject to a summary fine and court costs. In addition, if you do not get your vehicle emissions inspected you will not be able to get your vehicle safety inspected.

Will certified emissions inspection stations be audited to ensure they are conducting the required inspections on vehicles properly?

Yes. As it does in the current emissions program, PENNDOT will continue to conduct several audits (annually) at each certified emissions inspection station.

How do I file a complaint against an official PENNDOT emissions inspection station?

Consumer complaints may be filed by contacting the Pennsylvania Emissions Team Customer Call Center at 1-800-265-0921.

How can I obtain a copy of the Pennsylvania Emissions Inspection Program Regulations? Pennsylvania's Emission Inspection Program Regulations can be found at www.pacodeandbulletin.gov.

SAFETY INSPECTION QUESTIONS

Are any vehicles in the remaining 42 Non-I/M Emissions Counties exempt from the Enhanced Safety Inspection?

Yes. Vehicles weighing over 11,000 pounds and vehicles currently exempt from a safety inspection. Vehicles registered as a classic or collectible vehicle will be exempt from only the anti-tampering portion of the safety inspection. Exemptions are determined by the vehicle registration or by a certified safety inspection mechanic.

Can I get a waiver if my vehicle fails the Visual Anti-Tampering Check?

No. Waivers will not be issued to vehicles that do not pass the Visual Anti-Tampering Check. Any modification that changes the vehicle from a certified configuration to a non-certified configuration is considered tampering and the vehicle would not pass the safety inspection.

What should I do if I am out of Pennsylvania when my safety inspection expires?

Pennsylvania law allows vehicle owners who are outside the Commonwealth for more than 30 continuous days, to have their vehicle inspected within 10 days upon their return to Pennsylvania. It is recommended that you carry documentation (such as receipts) supporting your absence for the previous 30 days.

How can I obtain Pennsylvania Safety Inspection Program information?

Pennsylvania's Vehicle Equipment and Inspection Regulations can be found at www.pacodeandbulletin.gov.

Will certified safety inspection stations be audited to ensure they are properly conducting the required inspections on vehicles?

Yes. As it does in the current safety inspection program, PennDOT will continue to conduct audits at each certified safety inspection station.

How do I file a complaint against an official PennDOT safety inspection station?

Consumer complaints may be filed by contacting PennDOT's Vehicle Inspection Division at (717) 787-2895 or the PennDOT Tip line at PenndotTip@pa.gov.

AIR QUALITY

Why are different types of emissions inspections required throughout Pennsylvania? Why is this not a statewide program?

Per the Clean Air Act (CAA) Pennsylvania is a member of the Ozone Transport Commission and is included in the Northeast Ozone Transport Region (OTR). The CAA and federal I/M regulations require the twelve OTR states and the District of Columbia to implement an enhanced emissions inspection program in certain areas where national ground-level ozone standards were not met or had larger urban population areas. The CAA and EPA implementing regulations define those population areas as "any metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or portion of an MSA, within the state or area with a 1990 population of 100,000 or more as defined by the Office of Management and Budget regardless of the area's nonattainment classification". Pennsylvania originally contained 35 counties in 15 MSAs that met this population threshold. Pennsylvania asked EPA to remove 10 rural counties because of low populations or the counties didn't meet a minimum prescribed urban population density. The remaining 25 counties required to have an emissions inspection program were divided into four regions, each with different testing requirements depending on the severity of the ozone pollution or size of its urban population in the OTR. The Commonwealth took a customized approach to address the specific air-quality issues in each of the four regions and for the Pennsylvanians who live there. This "common sense" approach is the way Pennsylvania has ensured and will continue to ensure our citizens have clean air.

Why are there different emissions standards for different model-year vehicles?

Vehicles equipped with onboard diagnostics (OBD) comprise almost all of the vehicles tested. OBD-equipped vehicles are programmed to automatically illuminate a malfunctioning indicator light if the pollution control equipment has degraded to cause emissions to exceed an amount appropriate for the emission standard for which that vehicle is certified.

Why is Pennsylvania incorporating OBD I/M Checks into its emissions inspection program?

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued rules requiring states to incorporate OBD I/M Checks into their emissions inspection programs. OBD emissions inspection checks remain the state-of-the-art method to prevent excess vehicle emissions caused by malfunctioning emissions controls. All highway vehicles offered for

sale in the United States are required to have an OBD system. OBD regulatory standards are frequently updated as technological advances are made, which will allow OBD to better detect malfunctions and keep emissions as low as possible.

While OBD technology is present on all new highway vehicles, Pennsylvania's emissions inspection program is required only for subject light-duty, gasoline powered highway vehicles.

Why is an emissions inspection necessary for newer model-year vehicles?

Vehicle emissions standards continue to get cleaner, but vehicles are still responsible for a large amount of the emissions that contribute to the air pollution problem. For instance, in the Philadelphia area, highway vehicles produce about half of the oxides of nitrogen pollution which contributes to ozone and fine particulate formation. The 5-county Philadelphia area has been the Commonwealth's most difficult nonattainment area to bring into attainment. Other urban areas in the Commonwealth have similar percentages of pollution produced by highway vehicles. Because newer vehicles have such low emissions, a malfunctioning emissions control system can cause a vehicle to emit hundreds of times the pollution it is supposed to. Emissions inspections help make sure that vehicles continue to meet the emissions standards to which the vehicle was certified. In short, OBD emissions inspections help keep clean cars clean.

What does a motorist gain when repairing emissions-related problems?

Repairs to emissions-related components offer several advantages to the motorist:

- Reduce operating costs through improved fuel economy
- Repair minor problems before they become major, costly repairs
- Malfunctioning emissions controls could adversely affect vehicle performance and safety
- Protect the capital investment in the vehicle by prolonging its life
- Help ensure proper maintenance and thereby comply with warranty requirements
- Improve air quality: cleaner air for all Pennsylvanians

Why aren't diesel-fueled vehicles required to participate in Pennsylvania's emissions program?

Diesel-fueled vehicles are not required to participate in Pennsylvania's emissions inspection and maintenance (I/M) program because the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not yet approved an I/M program performance standard of testing for OBD-equipped diesel-fueled vehicles suitable for Pennsylvania to use in its Clean Air Act required State Implementation Plan. Absent this performance standard, current Pennsylvania law stipulates that the Department cannot implement more stringent requirements than required by the EPA under the Clean Air Act.

Has the current emissions inspection program helped to improve Pennsylvania's air quality?

Yes. Many of the Commonwealth's ozone and particulate matter nonattainment areas have come into attainment due to programs like the emissions inspection program. The

EPA has made the health-based national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) more stringent, therefore some nonattainment areas still exist. The emissions inspection program continues to lower air pollution and help the Commonwealth meet the NAAQS by ensuring that tested vehicles in Pennsylvania continue to meet the vehicle emissions clean air standards.

Does the state know how long the emissions inspection program will last?

The emissions program is currently required by federal law and regulation. Pennsylvania, through the I/M program and various other programs, is committed to cleaning up our air and will operate the program until it is determined in accordance with the Clean Air Act that the emissions inspection program is no longer necessary. In short, it appears unlikely that the program will become unnecessary within the foreseeable future.

Are other states doing their fair share to clean the air?

In general, any state that has an area(s) where ground level ozone concentrations are not attaining the national standard and have been designated by EPA as “moderate” in severity, must have a minimum “basic” vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance (I/M) program in those areas. Areas that have been designated as “severe” or worse or are located in the OTR above minimum population requirements regardless of severity, must have a more rigorous “enhanced” I/M program. All Northeastern OTR states that don’t meet federal air quality standards, including Pennsylvania, are subject to similar I/M program requirements as Pennsylvania. The Commonwealth continues to work with the EPA, Congress, and other states to ensure that all states do their fair share and that Pennsylvania is not unfairly singled out.

Where can motorists get more information on emissions testing and air quality issues?

Motorists can get more information regarding vehicle emissions inspection programs, as well as other air quality issues, from the EPA’s Office of Transportation and Air Quality at www.epa.gov/otaq/.

Where can motorists get more information on Pennsylvania’s Vehicle Emissions I/M Program?

Motorists can visit the “Drive Clean PA” website at www.drivecleanpa.state.pa.us or call 1-800-265-0921 for information on Pennsylvania’s Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program.