CALGARY SAFETY CONSULTANTS

Vehicle Pre-Use Inspection Checklist

How to use this checklist

Use this checklist for the daily pre-use inspection of pickups, service trucks, vans, flatbeds and other work vehicles. For trucks and buses that fall under **National Safety Code (NSC) Standard 13**, use the inspection schedule for the vehicle type (Schedule 1, 2 or 3) as your legal checklist and use this form to support it with your own company items, defect follow-up and records. Adapt the items to your vehicles and the manufacturer's manual.

How to use this form

1. Complete the vehicle and trip details on page 2 before you start, including the odometer reading.
2. Walk around the vehicle and work through every item on pages 2 and 3. Tick **OK**, **Defect** or **N/A** for each item. Don't tick anything you didn't actually check.
3. Record every defect in the defect report on page 4, even small ones, and decide whether it is minor or major using your company defect list or the NSC schedule.
4. If any defect makes the vehicle unsafe, **don't drive it**. Tag it, hold the key and tell your supervisor right away.
5. Sign the driver declaration. Keep monitoring the vehicle during the trip and report any new defect as soon as possible.
6. Supervisors review the form, act on defects and sign off repairs on page 5 before a tagged vehicle goes back into service.

Key terms

Term	What it means
Pre-use or pre-trip inspection	A structured check of the vehicle by the driver before it is used on a shift or day, recorded on a form or app.
Trip inspection	The daily inspection of an NSC commercial vehicle against the applicable schedule, recorded on a trip inspection report.
Schedules 1, 2 and 3	Schedule 1 covers trucks, tractors and trailers; Schedule 2 covers buses and trailers towed by a bus; Schedule 3 covers motor coaches with air ride suspension, air brakes and automatic brake adjusters.
Minor defect	Recorded and reported to the carrier. In Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, for example, it must be repaired before the next trip inspection.
Major defect	The vehicle must not be driven until the defect is repaired.
Do not use tag	A tag on the controls showing the vehicle is out of service, used with key control so it cannot be driven by accident.

When the NSC trip inspection rules apply (examples)

Jurisdiction	Vehicles covered	Inspection interval
Alberta	Commercial vehicles registered over 4,500 kg: daily trip inspection, no driving with a major defect. Registered 11,794 kg or more: written trip inspection report and Schedule 1 carried in the vehicle.	Daily
Saskatchewan	Trucks over 11,794 kg, buses designed to carry more than 10 people including the driver, and trailers they tow (SGI).	Once in every 24-hour period while in use
Ontario	Trucks over 4,500 kg, tow trucks of any weight and buses designed for 10 or more passengers.	Up to 24 hours before driving
Nova Scotia	Trucks, tractors and trailers over 4,500 kg registered weight, and buses.	At least once every 24 hours

Summary only, from Alberta Transportation, SGI, Government of Ontario and Nova Scotia sources checked in October 2026. Other provinces and territories adopt Standard 13 through their own law, so confirm the rules for the jurisdiction where your vehicles are registered and operate.

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Vehicle details and walkaround

Company or carrier | **Unit number** | **Plate** | **Odometer**

Driver (print) | **Date** | **Time** | **Location**

Trailer unit or plate (if towing) | **Make and model** | **Registered weight (kg)**

Vehicle type

- ☐ Light-duty pickup or van
- ☐ Service or picker truck
- ☐ NSC truck (Schedule 1)
- ☐ Bus (Schedule 2)
- ☐ Trailer
- ☐ Other

Walkaround: exterior (engine off, parking brake on)

Item to check	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes or defect details
Body, doors, mirrors and windshield: no damage that affects safe use or vision	☐	☐	☐	
Lights and reflectors: headlights, tail, brake, signal, hazard and clearance lights clean and working	☐	☐	☐	
Tires: inflation, tread depth, cuts, bulges and sidewall damage	☐	☐	☐	
Wheels and rims: lug nuts present and tight, no cracks or missing parts	☐	☐	☐	
Leaks under the vehicle: oil, coolant, fuel, hydraulic or brake fluid	☐	☐	☐	
Suspension and springs: no broken or shifted parts, vehicle sits level	☐	☐	☐	
Exhaust: secure, no leaks or damage	☐	☐	☐	
Fuel tank and cap: secure, cap in place, no leaks	☐	☐	☐	
Load and cargo: secured, within capacity, tailgate and boxes closed and latched	☐	☐	☐	
Headache rack, ladder racks and toolboxes: secure	☐	☐	☐	
Licence plate, registration and insurance documents present	☐	☐	☐	
Hitch, coupler, safety chains and breakaway cable (if towing)	☐	☐	☐	
Trailer lights, brakes, tires and load (if towing)	☐	☐	☐	

Under the hood (engine off)

Item to check	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes or defect details
Engine oil level	☐	☐	☐	
Coolant level	☐	☐	☐	
Brake fluid and power steering fluid	☐	☐	☐	
Washer fluid and DEF (where used)	☐	☐	☐	
Belts and hoses: no cracks, fraying or leaks	☐	☐	☐	
Battery: secure, terminals clean	☐	☐	☐	

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In-cab, running checks and equipment

In the cab and engine running

Item to check	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes or defect details
Seat, seat belts and seat adjustment work; belts latch and release	☐	☐	☐	
Gauges and warning lights normal after start-up (no ABS, airbag, brake or engine warnings)	☐	☐	☐	
Horn works	☐	☐	☐	
Windshield wipers and washers work; defroster and heater work	☐	☐	☐	
Steering: no excessive play, no binding or unusual noise	☐	☐	☐	
Service brakes: firm pedal, vehicle stops straight	☐	☐	☐	
Parking brake holds the vehicle	☐	☐	☐	
Air brakes (if equipped): pressure builds, low-air warning works, no audible leaks	☐	☐	☐	
Backup alarm and backup camera work	☐	☐	☐	
Beacon, strobe or amber warning lights work (if equipped)	☐	☐	☐	
Mirrors adjusted; windows clean	☐	☐	☐	
Cab clean, no loose items that could jam pedals or become projectiles	☐	☐	☐	

Emergency and safety equipment on board

Item to check	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes or defect details
Fire extinguisher: charged, tagged, mounted and accessible	☐	☐	☐	
First aid kit: complete for the number of occupants and your jurisdiction	☐	☐	☐	
Warning triangles or flares	☐	☐	☐	
Spill kit (if carrying fuel or fluids)	☐	☐	☐	
Emergency communication: charged phone, radio or satellite device for the route	☐	☐	☐	
Survival or winter kit for the season and route	☐	☐	☐	
Journey plan or check-in arrangement in place for remote or long trips	☐	☐	☐	
Dangerous goods documents and placards correct (if carrying dangerous goods)	☐	☐	☐	

Company-specific items (add your own)

Item to check	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes or defect details
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

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Vehicle Pre-Use Inspection Checklist

Defect report and driver declaration

Record every defect, even small ones. Use your company defect list or the NSC schedule to decide whether each one is minor or major. **A vehicle with a major defect, or any defect that makes it unsafe, must not be driven.**

Defects found

Item and description of defect	Minor	Major	Reported to and time	Action taken
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		

Inspection result

- ☐ No defects found
- ☐ Minor defects only: reported and scheduled for repair
- ☐ Major or unsafe defect: vehicle tagged out, not driven

Out-of-service steps (if the vehicle is unsafe)

- ☐ DO NOT USE tag placed on the steering wheel or controls.
- ☐ Key removed and handed to the supervisor or mechanic.
- ☐ Supervisor told in person or by phone, not just on the form.
- ☐ Vehicle parked safely, away from traffic, with hazards controlled.
- ☐ Defect entered on the maintenance or corrective action list with an owner and a date.

Tag number (if used)

Key held by

Supervisor notified (name and time)

Driver declaration

I inspected this vehicle as listed on this form and recorded every defect I found. I will monitor the vehicle during the trip and report any new defect as soon as possible.

Driver signature

Printed name

Date and time

Second driver or co-inspector (if any)

Printed name

Date and time

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Repair and return to service

Defect	Repair done	Repaired by (qualified person)	Date	Tag off
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐

- ☐ Each repair has been tested and the defect no longer exists.
- ☐ The repair is recorded in the vehicle's maintenance file.
- ☐ The tag was removed and the key returned only after the repair was confirmed.

Returned to service by | **Signature** | **Date**

Defects found during the trip (en route)

Time and location	Defect found	Minor	Major	Reported to
		☐	☐	
		☐	☐	
		☐	☐	
		☐	☐	

Supervisor review

- ☐ Form complete: every item ticked, details and odometer filled in, declaration signed.
- ☐ Every defect has an owner and a date, and major defects were tagged out.
- ☐ The form looks genuine: matches the odometer, date and the vehicle's recent history.
- ☐ Repeat defects on this unit have been raised with maintenance for a lasting fix.

Supervisor comments

Reviewed by | **Signature** | **Date**

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What a good vehicle pre-use inspection looks like

- Done before the vehicle is used on each shift or day, and again when a different driver takes over, after an incident or possible damage, and after repairs.
- Done at the vehicle, not from memory in the cab. Walk all the way around, look underneath and test what can be tested.
- Honest: defects are written down even when they're small. A form with a defect noted is a sign the system works.
- Followed up: defects reach the supervisor or shop the same day, and major or unsafe defects stop the vehicle until repaired.

Common mistakes

- Ticking every box without looking, or filling in forms at the end of the week.
- Driving on an inspection that is more than 24 hours old, for vehicles under the NSC trip inspection rules.
- Recording a defect but never telling anyone, or no one following it up.
- Tagging a vehicle without removing the key.
- Using one generic form for every vehicle instead of adding the items that matter on each one.

Records

- Keep completed forms with the vehicle's maintenance file so inspections and repairs can be read together.
- Retention for NSC trip inspection reports is set by each province's transportation law. SGI notes that drivers carry the reports for the current and previous day with the schedule and must produce them when a peace officer asks.
- Report formats aren't prescribed in Saskatchewan: paper or electronic reports both work. Electronic apps make it easier to add photos and track repairs.
- Where no retention period is set, keeping records for a full three-year COR audit cycle is a sensible default.

Who does what

Role	Responsibilities
Driver	Does the inspection before use, records it honestly, reports defects, monitors the vehicle during the trip and doesn't drive a vehicle that's unsafe.
Supervisor	Makes sure inspections happen before work starts, reviews forms, acts on defects the same day and never pressures anyone to drive a flagged vehicle.
Mechanic or shop	Repairs defects, confirms the repair and clears the vehicle for use; carries out scheduled maintenance and periodic inspections.
Employer or carrier	Provides checklists, training, defect and tagging procedures, records and follow-up, and meets NSC and maintenance requirements.

What auditors look for

- A written procedure saying which vehicles are inspected, when and by whom, and checklists that fit the vehicles.
- Completed records for the units and dates sampled, with defects traceable to repairs.
- Drivers who can describe what they check and what they do when they find a defect, and tagged vehicles actually out of service.

Free guide. Read How to Conduct Vehicle and Equipment Pre-Use Inspections at calgarysafetyconsultants.ca/safety-guides/inspections/pre-use-inspections/. Need help setting up pre-use inspections or digital forms in Site App Pro? Call Calgary Safety Consultants at 1-888-231-0358.

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