Roadside Inspection Checklist

What Every Commercial Driver Needs for DOT Inspections

FIRST UNDERWRITERS
Insurance Brokers

Use this checklist to prepare for DOT roadside inspections. Having all required documents and equipment ready helps inspections proceed smoothly and demonstrates professionalism. Review this list before each trip and keep it in your cab for reference.

Driver Documents

- ■ **Commercial Driver's License (CDL)** — Valid, not expired, correct class and endorsements for vehicle/cargo
- ■ **Medical Examiner's Certificate** — Current (valid for up to 24 months), must be carried if not on CDL
- ■ **Skill Performance Evaluation (SPE) Certificate** — If applicable for medical exemption
- ■ **Driver's copy of previous 7 days of logs** — Or ability to display on ELD
- ■ **Hours of Service supporting documents** — Fuel receipts, toll receipts, delivery receipts for current trip

Vehicle Documents

- ■ **Vehicle Registration** — Current for tractor (and trailer if applicable)
- ■ **Proof of Insurance** — Current insurance card or certificate
- ■ **IFTA Permit/Decals** — If operating interstate (fuel tax compliance)
- ■ **IRP Cab Card** — International Registration Plan credentials for apportioned vehicles
- ■ **Annual Inspection Sticker/Report** — Valid annual inspection within last 12 months
- ■ **Lease Agreement** — If operating under lease (original or copy)

ELD and Logging Requirements

- ■ **ELD functioning properly** — Device powered on, no malfunction indicators
- ■ **Current day's record displayed** — Shows duty status, hours available, header info
- ■ **Previous 7 days accessible** — Ability to display or print 8 total days of records
- ■ **ELD user manual available** — Physical copy or accessible electronic version
- ■ **Data transfer instruction sheet** — Step-by-step guide for your specific ELD model
- ■ **Blank paper logs (8-day supply)** — In case of ELD malfunction

■ If using short-haul exemption: Time records showing start/end times, total hours, and that you operate within 150 air-miles.

© 2026 First Underwriters Insurance Brokers | www.firstunderwriters.com | (425) 242-5357

Cargo Documents

- ■ **Bill of Lading / Shipping Papers** — Properly completed for cargo being transported
- ■ **Hazmat Shipping Papers** — If hauling hazardous materials (within driver's reach)
- ■ **Emergency Response Information** — For hazmat loads (ERG or shipper-provided)
- ■ **Oversize/Overweight Permits** — If applicable for load dimensions or weight
- ■ **Broker/Load Confirmation** — Rate confirmation or load documentation

© 2026 First Underwriters Insurance Brokers | www.firstunderwriters.com | (425) 242-5357

Required Safety Equipment

- ■ **Fire Extinguisher** — Properly charged (in green zone), UL rated 5 B:C or more, securely mounted
- ■ **Warning Triangles (3)** — DOT-approved reflective triangles, undamaged
- ■ **Spare Fuses** — If vehicle uses fuses, one spare of each type used

Hazmat Loads — Additional Equipment

- ■ **Proper Placards** — Correct placards for materials being transported
- ■ **Hazmat Employee Training Documentation** — Proof of required training
- ■ **Security Plan Documentation** — If required for high-hazard materials

Pre-Inspection Vehicle Check

Before reaching an inspection station or when pulled over, quickly verify these high-violation items:

System	Quick Check
Lights	■ All lights working (headlights, brake, turn, markers, clearance)
Brakes	■ No audible air leaks, brake lights function, no warning lights
Tires	■ Proper inflation, adequate tread, no damage or bulges visible
Coupling	■ Fifth wheel locked, kingpin engaged, air/electrical lines connected
Mirrors	■ Both mirrors present, secure, properly adjusted
Windshield	■ No major cracks in wiper sweep area, wipers functional
Cargo	■ Properly secured, doors/tarps closed, no shifting evident
Leaks	■ No fluid leaks visible under vehicle

Inspection Levels Explained

Level	Name	What Is Inspected
I	**Full Inspection**	Complete driver and vehicle examination (most thorough): driver credentials, HOS, vehicle systems, cargo
II	**Walk-Around**	Driver interview and walk-around vehicle inspection: driver credentials, HOS, visible vehicle defects
III	**Driver-Only**	Driver credentials and Hours of Service only: CDL, medical card, logs/ELD, shipping papers
IV	**Special**	One-time examination of specific item: typically for follow-up or specific concerns
V	**Vehicle-Only**	Vehicle inspection without driver present: conducted at carrier facilities

© 2026 First Underwriters Insurance Brokers | www.firstunderwriters.com | (425) 242-5357

During the Inspection

Do's

✓ **Be cooperative and professional** — A positive attitude helps inspections go smoothly

✓ **Have documents organized and ready** — Know where everything is in your cab

✓ **Know how to operate your ELD** — Be able to display records and transfer data

✓ **Answer questions honestly** — Provide factual, direct answers

✓ **Stay with your vehicle** — Unless directed otherwise by the inspector

✓ **Watch the inspection** — You can observe the vehicle inspection (at safe distance)

Don'ts

■ **Don't argue with the inspector — Disputes can be addressed through proper channels later**

■ **Don't volunteer unnecessary information — Answer what's asked, nothing more**

■ **Don't attempt to edit ELD records during inspection — This looks like falsification**

■ **Don't offer gifts or bribes — This is a serious federal offense**

■ **Don't become hostile or aggressive — This can escalate the situation and result in additional scrutiny**

ELD Data Transfer Process

When an inspector requests your ELD data, you must be able to transfer it via one of these methods:

Method 1: Wireless Transfer (Primary)

- ■ Officer provides output file comment (identifier)
- ■ Select 'Transfer Data' or similar option on your ELD
- ■ Choose 'Web Services' or 'Wireless' transfer method
- ■ Enter the output file comment when prompted
- ■ Confirm successful transfer (ELD shows confirmation)

Method 2: Local Transfer (Backup)

- ■ If wireless fails, officer may request USB or Bluetooth transfer
- ■ Connect USB drive or enable Bluetooth as required
- ■ Select local transfer option on your ELD
- ■ Follow device-specific instructions to complete transfer

■ Know your ELD's transfer process BEFORE you need it. Practice the steps so you're not fumbling during an inspection.

If Violations Are Found

Inspectors may identify violations ranging from minor paperwork issues to serious safety defects. Understanding the outcomes helps you respond appropriately.

Outcome	What It Means	Your Action
No Violations	Vehicle and driver pass inspection	Continue trip; report clean inspection to carrier
Violations - No OOS	Defects found but not severe enough to remove vehicle from service	Correct violations within specified timeframe; report to carrier immediately
Driver Out of Service	Driver cannot operate until condition is corrected (HOS, medical, CDL issue)	Stop driving immediately; contact carrier; cannot drive until resolved
Vehicle Out of Service	Vehicle has defects too severe for safe operation	Vehicle cannot move until repairs completed; carrier arranges repairs
Both OOS	Driver and vehicle both have serious violations	Neither can operate; contact carrier for assistance

■ **Out-of-Service orders are serious. Operating a vehicle or driving while under an OOS order results in additional violations and penalties.**

Most Common Violations to Avoid

Category	Common Issues	Prevention
HOS/Logs	Exceeding limits, false logs, form/manner errors, no ELD	Monitor hours, accurate records, complete log headers daily
Brakes	Out of adjustment, air leaks, worn components, ABS issues	Check adjustment daily, listen for leaks, inspect visually
Lights	Inoperative lamps, damaged lenses, missing reflectors	Test all lights pre-trip, carry spare bulbs
Tires	Low tread, improper inflation, damage, mismatched duals	Check pressure and tread depth regularly
Driver	Medical card, CDL issues, log book violations	Keep documents current, know expiration dates
Cargo	Improper securement, overweight, shifted load	Verify securement at each stop, know weight limits

After the Inspection

- **Get your copy of the inspection report** — Review it before leaving
- **Report results to your carrier immediately** — Good or bad, they need to know
- **If violations found:** Document what was cited and any repair requirements
- **If repairs needed:** Complete within required timeframe (usually 15 days)
- **Keep inspection report copy** — Retain for your records

Questions about fleet compliance and insurance?
First Underwriters Insurance Brokers
(425) 242-5357 | www.firstunderwriters.com