

Mandatory Vehicle Safety Inspections

This IPRO report examines state programs that mandate vehicle safety inspections. The report presents the procedures states use to implement and maintain their inspection programs and also summarizes a recent study on the effectiveness of mandatory vehicle inspections.

State Vehicle Inspections Programs:

Vehicle safety inspection programs are implemented at the state level. Currently, fifteen states require safety inspections of vehicles registered in their state. Iowa does not require mandatory safety inspections. The requirements of a safety inspection vary by state. Inspections often include examining and testing the suspension, steering, brakes, tires, lighting and electrical system, windows, mirrors, windshield defrosters, washers and wipers, the fuel system, speedometer, odometer, horn and warning devices, the body and chassis, and the exhaust system.¹ Some states mandate a safety inspection every year and others require an inspection every two years. States also differ in the fee charged for a safety inspection and the agency that oversees the inspection program. In some states the inspection facilities are state owned and in others they are privately owned businesses licensed by the state to perform vehicle safety inspections. Table 1 summarizes the significant aspects of state vehicle inspection programs in the fifteen states that mandate them.

Table 1

State	Frequency of Inspection	Fee	Regulating Agency	Inspection Facility
Delaware ²	Every Two Years	Free	Division of Motor Vehicles	Delaware DMV
Hawaii ³	Annually	Less than \$15 ⁴	Department of Transportation	State Authorized Private Business
Louisiana ⁵	Annually	\$10-\$18	Department of Environmental Quality	State Authorized Private Business
Maine ⁶	Annually	Less than \$12.50	State Police	State Authorized Private Business

¹<http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/pdotforms/inspections/Inspection%20Program%20Effectiveness%20Study.pdf>

² "State of Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles - General Inspection Information." *State of Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles - About DMV*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009.

http://www.dmv.de.gov/services/vehicle_services/other/ve_other_general.shtml.

³ "Safety Checks." *Maui County, HI - Official Website*. Web. 18 Nov. 2009.

<http://www.co.maui.hi.us/index.aspx?NID=1068>.

⁴ "Hawaii DMV Registration - Frequently Asked Questions - DMV Guide." *DMV Info Made Simple - The Unofficial DMV Guide*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <http://www.dmv.org/hi-hawaii/registration-faqs.php>.

⁵ "Motor Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance Program." *Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality HOME*. Web. 18 Nov. 2009. <http://www.deq.state.la.us/portal/tabid/110/Default.aspx>.

⁶ "State Police: Vehicle Inspections & Crashes: Motor Vehicle Investigations." *Maine.gov*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. http://www.maine.gov/dps/msp/vehicles_inspections/motor_vehicle_inspections.html.

State	Frequency of Inspection	Fee	Regulating Agency	Inspection Facility
Massachusetts ⁷	Annually	\$29	Department of Environmental Protection	State Authorized Private Business
Mississippi ⁸	Annually	\$5	Department of Public Safety	State Authorized Private Business
Missouri ⁹	Every Two Years	Less than \$12	Department of Public Safety and State Highway Patrol	State Authorized Private Business
New Hampshire ¹⁰	Annually	Unspecified	Department of Safety	State Authorized Private Business
New Jersey ¹¹	Every Two Years	Free- Unspecified charge *	Motor Vehicle Commission	State Owned Facilities and State Authorized Private Business
New York ¹²	Annually	\$21-\$37	Department of Motor Vehicles	State Authorized Private Business
North Carolina ¹³	Annually	\$13.60	Division of Motor Vehicles	State Authorized Private Business
Pennsylvania ¹⁴	Annually	Varies by Facility	Department of Transportation	State Authorized Private Business
Vermont ¹⁵	Annually	Varies by Facility	Department of Motor Vehicles	State Authorized Private Business
Virginia ¹⁶	Annually	\$16	State Police	State Authorized Private Business
West Virginia ¹⁷	Annually	Unspecified	State Police	State Authorized Private Business

⁷ *Massachusetts Vehicle Check*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <http://www.vehicletest.state.ma.us/about_whywhat.html>.

⁸ "Frequently Asked Questions." *Mississippi Department of Public Safety*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.dps.state.ms.us/dps/dps.nsf/webFAQs/1A0356D77E59FBC886256A3E00517DA0?OpenDocument>>.

⁹ <http://sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/11csr/11c50-2.pdf>

¹⁰ "Saf-C 3200." *NH General Court*. Web. 18 Nov. 2009. <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/state_agencies/saf-c3200.html>.

¹¹ "State of New Jersey - Motor Vehicle Commission." *The Official Web Site for The State of New Jersey*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.state.nj.us/mvc/Inspections/HowDoI.htm>>.

* State owned facilities provide inspections free of charge and privately owned facilities charge and unspecified amount.

¹² "NYS DMV - Vehicle Safety, Inspection, Repairs and Dealers." *New York State Department of Motor Vehicles - NYS DMV - NYS DMV - Driver - Vehicle*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/vehsafe.htm>>.

¹³ "NCDOT Division of Motor Vehicles: Vehicle Services." *NCDOT: Home*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <http://www.ncdot.org/DMV/vehicle_services/>.

¹⁴ "Station Owner Forms, Publications and FAQs." *PennDOT Driver and Vehicle Services*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/forms/vehicleSafetyInspectionForms.shtml>>.

¹⁵ "Motor Vehicle Inspections | Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles." *Home | Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://dmv.vermont.gov/safety/laws/inspection>>.

¹⁶ "Safety Division." *Virginia State Police*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.vsp.state.va.us/Safety.shtml>>.

¹⁷ "WEST VIRGINIA MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTION PROGRAM." *The West Virginia State Police*. Web. 19 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.wvstatepolice.com/traffic/mvi.htm>>.

Vehicle Safety Inspection Administration:¹⁸

Fourteen of the fifteen states that mandate vehicle safety inspections use privately owned businesses licensed by the state to conduct the inspections. These fourteen states have various rules regulating the inspections by private businesses. Maine makes their extensive rules manual available online and these rules are summarized in the next paragraph. Maine was selected because their manual is extensive and provides a good representation of the regulations of the other fourteen states.

Maine's inspection program is run by the Maine State Police and this agency certifies inspection facilities and licenses all technicians. In order for a facility to be certified the owner must complete an application and undergo a background check for a fee of \$15. Before the license is granted, a member of the Maine State Police inspects the facility to insure that it meets the required standards, including having the proper equipment to conduct the inspections. If the station is certified its license is valid for two years. Certified stations must employ technicians who are certified to perform vehicle inspections. In order to become a certified technician, a person must be 18 years old and pay the \$1 application and \$15 background check fees to the Maine State Police. He or she must also score a 70 percent or better on a vehicle knowledge examination. Technician licenses must be renewed every five years. The inspection facility must have state vehicle inspection manuals and vehicle stickers on hand. Both the manuals and stickers are purchased from the state. Licensed facilities are subject to random inspections by the Maine State Police. If an inspection facility is discovered to be in violation of any of the rules specified in the state inspection manual their license is subject to a six-month suspension or permanent revocation.

Vehicle Safety Inspection Effectiveness:¹⁹

"Vehicle Inspection Effectiveness Report," published by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation in 2009, presents an up-to-date and comprehensive summary of the effect of vehicle safety inspections in reducing accidents. The study compared the number fatal accidents in states with mandatory inspection programs to states without inspection programs. Crash data was obtained from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), a federal data set that provides information for every fatal automobile crash in the United States. Data was also collected on state inspection programs. The statistical models showed that states with mandatory vehicle inspections had 1.5 fewer fatal crashes per every billion vehicle miles traveled than states without inspection programs. The model estimated that without its inspection program, Pennsylvania would have about 169 more fatal crashes and 187 more fatalities per year. In 2008 there were 1,358 fatal car accidents in Pennsylvania,²⁰ so the 169 lives saved by the inspection program represents about an 11 percent decrease in the number of fatal accidents. A cost-to-benefit analysis was also conducted as part of the study. Using the U.S. Department of Transportation's official estimate of the value of life (\$5.8 million/human life), it was estimated

¹⁸http://www.maine.gov/dps/msp/vehicles_inspections/documents/MaineMotorVehicleInspectionManualRev121506_000.pdf

¹⁹<http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/pdot/forms/inspections/Inspection%20Program%20Effectiveness%20Study.pdf>

²⁰ "FARS Encyclopedia: Crashes - Time." *FARS Encyclopedia*. Web. 12 Dec. 2009. <<http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Crashes/CrashesTime.aspx>>.

that the benefit of Pennsylvania's programs was \$1,084.6 million.* The cost of the vehicle inspection program was calculated to be \$621.3 million. Thus, the cost-to-benefit analysis shows a \$463.3 million estimated benefit per year from mandatory vehicle safety inspections in Pennsylvania.

* (187 less fatalities)x(\$5.8 million/human life)