

# TRUCK TALK

A Publication of  
Continental Western Group<sup>SM</sup>



SEPTEMBER 2007

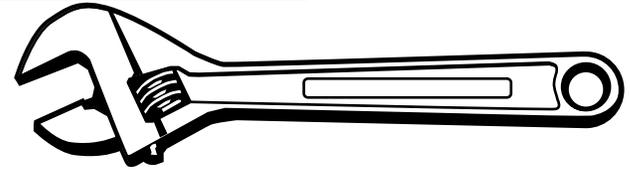
## Pre-Trip Inspections

The Large Truck Causation Study of 2004 indicated that the majority of crashes involving commercial motor vehicles were caused by bad decisions made by one of the drivers involved in the crash. Mechanical failures, however, continue to have their fair share of the blame when causes of crashes are scrutinized.

Part 392.7 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations deals with the inspection and use of Commercial Motor Vehicles. No commercial motor vehicle shall be driven unless the driver is satisfied that the following parts and accessories are in good working order, nor shall any driver fail to use or make use of such parts and accessories when and as needed:

- Service brakes, including trailer brake connections
- Parking (hand) brake
- Steering mechanism
- Lighting devices and reflectors
- Tires
- Horn
- Windshield wiper or wipers
- Rear-vision mirror or mirrors
- Coupling devices

This is a regulation mandated by the federal government, all motor carriers go over this in their orientation process, and drivers have sat through countless safety meetings dealing with pre-trip inspections. Then why is the national average for vehicle out-of-service violations in SAFER at 23%? Yes, the DOT inspectors have SAFER and SafeStat as tools to choose who to inspect, have the ISS-D score as a guide, and the DOT keeps hiring more and more enforcement personnel all the time. BUT, just imagine how much your company's vehicle out-of-service could be reduced if drivers did a REAL pre-trip inspection instead of a casual "walk-around thump-the-tires, yep the lights are on pre-trip inspection".



In April 2007, Marine Sergeant Brandon Guthrie, who has served in Iraq and is now a Marine Corp. recruiter, addressed the Oregon Trucking Association Safety Conference in Bend, Oregon. Sgt. Guthrie spoke to this group of motor carriers about the multiple checks and attention to detail a military vehicle receives before it is sent out on a mission. Those vehicles are checked, checked again, and checked once more, as the performance of the vehicle is vital to the success of each mission. This process is aimed at making certain each component performs at its absolute best in order to provide safety for those operating the equipment as well as those around who are part of the mission.

You depend on your vehicle and all of its components to all work properly and get you to your destination and on-time. Preparing for your day on the road should be considered one of the most important aspects of your job as a professional driver. Every day you face inconsiderate drivers, tailgaters, bad directions, irate customers, inclement weather, road construction projects, and a host of other factors that impact your ability to do your job. Having total confidence in the mechanical condition of your vehicle is, as they say, priceless.

What are the consequences of not doing a proper, serious pre-trip inspection? You sit along the side of the road waiting for a service vehicle to charge you obscene amounts of money for repairs, or you sit at a scale house after an inspection, or a mechanical failure leads to an accident.

What Sgt. Guthrie said about getting ready for a successful mission is good to remember as you prepare to meet the challenges of your day on the road. A good pre-trip inspection is one of the things that separates the professional driver from those who drive a truck.

