



Taking a CLOSER LOOK

Ontario's new inspection process will involve checking even more components, careful measurements, and a mandatory road test.

By Allan Janssen

Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is planning a series of information sessions to bring technicians up to speed on the long-anticipated changes coming to its Safety Standard Inspection.

The changes don't take effect until July 1, but the ministry is already encouraging inspection stations to get familiar with the new Regulation 611.

"Even though you're not certifying vehicles to the new standard yet, it's OK if you want to start getting used to

the new process," said Rhonda Lindsay, manager of the business innovation team in the ministry's Carrier Safety and Enforcement Branch. "That's going to take some time. There's no reason you can't start practicing and getting comfortable with the new requirements now."

Speaking at a symposium hosted by the Automotive Aftermarket Retailers of Ontario recently, Lindsay said the new rules, the first major rewrite of the inspection process in 40 years, can be viewed online at www.Ontario.ca/mvis.

Approximately 33,000 technicians at more than 12,000 stations across the province are qualified to do the inspection, which is required when registering a rebuilt vehicle, transferring a used vehicle to a new owner, registering a vehicle coming in from another province, or changing the status of a

vehicle from 'unfit' to 'fit.'

The changes to the regulations were two years in the making, and involved a lot of input from industry players. The new process was also field tested by a handful of shops.

"The last thing we wanted was a new standard that made sense to government but made no sense to people on the floor," Lindsay said.

Toronto shop owner John Cochrane, who helped field test the new inspection, said the new requirements add only a few more minutes to the process.

"It's a huge, huge improvement over the old inspection," he said. "And it really only takes about 10 minutes more. On first blush, some guys will say they need an hour and a half or two hours for this inspection. But that's going to kill it. The government is very mindful of what the consumer is paying."

He thinks shops could comfortably charge \$110 to \$120 range for the inspection.

"I think that could be the sweet spot," he said. "If you start to creep into the \$180 to \$200 range for an inspection, it's going to create issues."

MTO inspection officer Bob Stickman agreed, saying the ministry doesn't want to price a used car out of the public's reach, or push people out of the used-car market.

He offered a summary look at the new inspection process, starting with its ease-of-use as a PDF document that resides on a shop computer or can easily be referenced on the ministry website.

One of the biggest changes inspectors will need to get used to is the level of specificity that is required.

"Proper measurements and recordings of those measurements will become the norm for you," he predicted.

And, as with the old inspection, a pass or fail is based on the condition of the vehicle at time of inspection, he stressed. "That hasn't changed. This is not a prediction of the vehicle's future condition. It is also not a warranty of the condition of the vehicle. You don't have to warranty it."

Here are some of the major changes:

Section 1: Powertrain

“Over the years, I don’t know how many people have said why aren’t U-joints included in the safety inspection? Why aren’t CV joints?” he said. “Well guess what, folks. They’re in there now.”

Also requiring inspection are engine and transmission mounts, gear shifter, gear indicator, accelerator pedals and actuators, accelerator cables, turbochargers, DEF systems, drive shaft, differential, clutch, clutch pedal, and the drive belt pulley.

“Technology is changing all the time,” said Stickan. “So we’ve included criteria for electric vehicles, hybrid electric powertrain vehicles, and compressed natural gas, propane-fueled vehicles.”

Section 2: Suspension

Among new inspection requirements are ride height, air suspension components, and suspension system travel. There are also new criteria for shock and strut inspection.

Section 3: Brakes

Disassembly or removal of wheels and brake parts may be required in order to facilitate a full inspection of all components. Measurements must be taken of brake-shoe lining thickness and brake-drum diameter. On disc brakes, the rotor thickness and pad friction thickness (both inner and outer) must be measured.

The new rules distinguish between types of brake systems, with different test criteria for vacuum assist, hydraulic assist, and air assist brakes. There are also new requirements for ABS and ESC systems.

Section 4: Steering

New requirements include rack and pinion steering parts (boot, bellows, clamps), upper strut bearings, steering dampener, remote steering, power steering pumps, and associated components.

Section 5: Instruments & Auxiliary Equipment

The horn switch must be properly marked. Speedometer and odometer function will have to be verified. And windshield wipers must be in working order.



Bob Stickan

New checks include coolant leakage from all heaters and fuel leakage from auxiliary heaters.

PTO and plow controls must be properly mounted so they don’t interfere with steering or pedals.

Section 6: Lamps & Electrical

Lighting requirements have all been updated to incorporate the lighting equipment required by the federal safety standard at the time the vehicle was new.

On LED lights there are failure thresholds if not all diodes are working. Centre-mounted brake lights, hazard lights, and daytime running lights must all be checked. Headlight aim must be checked.

Battery hold-down straps and cables must be inspected.

Section 7: Body

All latches, handles, door openers, hinges, and other devices attached to the vehicle must now be inspected.

There are also specific requirements to verify the structural integrity of the body, frame, sub-frame, tailgate, bumper, and seats.

Section 8: Tires & Wheels

Minimum tread depth has been increased from 1.5 mm to 2 mm. Retreads and re-grooving are now prohibited, as is the mixing of radial with other tire types.

Tire inflation will have to be checked and recorded. And while TPMS is not mandatory, if the malfunction indicator lamp doesn’t light during cycle check or if it stays illuminated, that must be recorded.

Use of wheel spacers is now prohibited, although adapters are permitted if they’re in good shape.

Section 9: Coupling Devices

Coupling devices were always part of the old inspection, but now there are specific requirements for a number of different hitch systems. Rust and corrosion resulting in structural deterioration is an issue. And any hardware that is permanently installed on the vehicle must be inspected.

Section 10: Road Test

The purpose of the road test is to enable the detection of safety concerns in the vehicle that can’t be found while the vehicle is stationary.

It must be over 40 km-h, with left and right turns at full lock (checking for abnormal noises, binding, or seizing).

The road test must include a heavy application of service brakes to a full stop, and driving over a bump of at least 5 cm in height. There is also a new requirement to verify parking brake performance.



Rhonda Lindsay

Section 11: Inspection Report

An inspection report must be completed for every safety inspection conducted, with one copy going to the customer and one copy (either paper or electronic) retained on site for one year. It must include date of inspection, VIN, odometer reading, and all relevant measurements.

The MTO is hoping the roll-out goes smoothly and is encouraging inspectors to offer their feedback as they get used to the new system.

“We understand this is not going to be perfect out of the gate,” said Lindsay. “Our expectation is that it’s a work in progress. We’re not going to just put it on the shelf for another 40 years. We’re going to stay in touch with all the stakeholders, and your comments will be important to us.” □