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State Motor Vehicle Safety Inspections and Emissions Testing

For this report, we investigated state vehicle safety inspection laws. We found that 17 states require routine passenger vehicle inspections, either annually or biennially. Since 2000, five states have discontinued the requirement for annual passenger vehicle inspections. Additionally, we also found that 27 states have some form of vehicle emission testing requirements.

With respect to New England states, Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts are the three states that require vehicle inspections annually. Connecticut and Rhode Island require biennial inspections. Annual safety inspection and annual emissions testing requirements in New Hampshire will end on January 31, 2026.¹

Safety inspections can vary in detail from state to state. However, most inspections include checking tires, brakes, lights, windshields, windshield wipers, mirrors, seat belts, steering and alignment, and suspension.²

Like safety inspections, emissions testing can also vary by state. Emissions testing will check any or all levels of seven chemicals in exhaust: benzene, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, oxygen, and sulfur dioxide.³

States with Annual Safety Inspections

Nine states require annual safety inspections. They are:

- Hawaii;
- Maine;
- Massachusetts;
- New Hampshire;
- New York;
- North Carolina;

¹ New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles, “Inspections & Emissions,” *New Hampshire Department of Safety*, accessed November 5, 2025, <https://www.dmv.nh.gov/vehicles-boats-and-titles/inspections-emissions#:~:text=Under%20the%20new%20State%20budget,inspections%20remain%20required%20as%20usual.>

² Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, “What Is Checked During a Vehicle Safety Inspection?,” accessed November 3, 2025, <https://www.nationwide.com/lc/resources/auto-insurance/articles/vehicle-safety-inspection>.

³ Progressive, “What Is a Car Emissions Test?,” accessed November 3, 2025, <https://www.progressive.com/answers/what-is-car-emissions-test/>.

- Pennsylvania;
- Vermont; and,
- Virginia (see Appendix A for sources for each state).

New Hampshire currently has yearly safety inspection requirements, but this will be discontinued January 31, 2026.⁴ This will make New Hampshire the first New England state to not require safety inspections of any sort.

States with Biennial Safety Inspections

Eight states require safety inspections every two years. They are listed below:

- Delaware;
- Louisiana;
- Missouri;
- New Jersey;
- Ohio;
- Rhode Island;
- Utah; and,
- West Virginia (see Appendix B for sources for each state).

West Virginia changed their safety inspection requirements in 2024 from annual to biennial.⁵

States with Unique Laws

Four states only require safety inspections when registering an out-of-state car in-state for the first time. They are:

- Iowa;
- Kansas;
- Kentucky; and,
- Nebraska (see Appendix C for sources).

Additionally, Maryland only requires safety inspections at the purchase or title transfer of a used car.⁶

⁴ New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles, “Inspections & Emissions.”

⁵ West Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, *Vehicle Inspection*, accessed November 2, 2025, <https://transportation.wv.gov/DMV/Vehicle-Services/Pages/Vehicle-Inspection.aspx>.

⁶ Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration, “Six-Year Emission Testing,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://mva.maryland.gov/vehicles/Pages/Six-Year-Emission-Testing.aspx#:~:text=Many%20Maryland%20vehicles%20are%20driving,is%20required%20every%20two-years>.

States with Emissions Testing

We found that 27 states have some form of legislation that requires vehicle emissions testing. However, each state's guidelines for their emissions test vary (by the make of the car, exemption periods, etc.).

The 1990 Amendments to Clean Air Act (CAA) designates different regions of the U.S. as nonattainment areas if air quality levels set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are not met.⁷ The CAA gives states the authority to establish passenger vehicle emissions testing requirements to achieve compliance with NAAQS.⁸

We found that 22 of the 27 states only require emissions tests in counties that include or surround major metropolitan areas. Most of these areas are designated as nonattainment counties by NAAQS.⁹ Five states have state-wide emissions testing requirements.

The five states that have state-wide requirements are:

- Connecticut;
- Delaware;
- Massachusetts;
- New Jersey; and,
- Rhode Island.

Colorado is the one state that has different frequency requirements for emissions tests based on the model year of the vehicle and by county. For models from 1982 and newer, emissions tests are required biennially, and for models from 1981 and older, emissions tests are required annually.¹⁰

Emissions tests for ten states are required annually. These states are listed below:

- Arizona;
- Georgia;
- Maine;
- Massachusetts (state-wide);
- Nevada;
- New York;
- North Carolina;

⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Clean Air Act (CAA) and Federal Facilities*, accessed November 12, 2025, <https://www.epa.gov/enforcement/clean-air-act-caa-and-federal-facilities>.

⁸ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Clean Air Act (CAA) and Federal Facilities*.

⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Nonattainment Areas for Criteria Pollutants (Green Book)*, October 31, 2025, <https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/mapnpoll.html>.

¹⁰ Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, *Emissions inspections for gasoline-powered vehicles*, January 16, 2025, [https://cdphe.colorado.gov/motor-vehicle-emissions/emissions-inspections-for-gasoline-powered-vehicles#:~:text=Colorado%20has%20rules%20for%20emissions%20inspections%20for,to%2014000%20pounds**%20On-Board%20Diagnostic%20\(OBD\)%20Inspection](https://cdphe.colorado.gov/motor-vehicle-emissions/emissions-inspections-for-gasoline-powered-vehicles#:~:text=Colorado%20has%20rules%20for%20emissions%20inspections%20for,to%2014000%20pounds**%20On-Board%20Diagnostic%20(OBD)%20Inspection).

- Pennsylvania;
- Texas; and,
- Vermont (see Appendix D for sources).

New Hampshire currently has requirements for annual emissions testing state-wide, but, like their safety inspection requirements, that requirement will be repealed January 31, 2026.¹¹

Emissions for 15 states are required biennially. These states are listed below:

- California;
- Connecticut (state-wide);
- Delaware (state-wide);
- Illinois;
- Indiana;
- Louisiana;
- Maryland;
- Missouri;
- New Jersey (state-wide);
- New Mexico;
- Rhode Island (state-wide);
- Ohio;
- Oregon;
- Utah; and,
- Virginia (see Appendix E for sources).

States with No Safety Inspection and No Emissions Testing

Five states have no periodic safety or emissions inspection requirements. However, law enforcement is permitted to conduct roadside vehicles inspections if they are suspected of malfunctioning. These states are:

- Alaska;
- Arkansas;
- Idaho;
- Florida; and,
- Michigan (see Appendix F for sources).

There are ten states with no safety and emissions inspections:

- Minnesota;
- Mississippi;
- Montana;
- North Dakota;

¹¹ New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles, “Inspections & Emissions.”

- Oklahoma;
- South Carolina;
- South Dakota;
- Tennessee;
- Washington; and,
- Wyoming (see Appendix G for sources).

Five of these states have discontinued statewide safety inspections since 2000. These states are:

- Oklahoma (2001);¹²
- Mississippi (2015);¹³
- Washington (2020);¹⁴
- Tennessee (2022);¹⁵ and,
- Texas (2025).¹⁶

As noted previously, New Hampshire will discontinue their annual safety and emissions inspections in 2026.¹⁷

Conclusion

We found in this report that the northeast region has the most stringent vehicle inspection laws in comparison to other regions of U.S. All states in this region have routine safety inspection or emissions testing requirements. New Hampshire will break this pattern when their requirements for safety and emissions testing end in January 2026.

Moreover, all ten states that do not have any safety or emissions inspection laws are located primarily in the Southern, Upper Midwest, and Plains regions of the U.S. These states are among the least densely populated in the U.S. Of these states, half of them have discontinued their safety inspection requirements in the past 25 years.

This report was completed on November 19, 2025, by Adelyne Collin, Erin Geib, and Rhiannon Hubbard under the supervision of VLRS Director, Dr. Anthony “Jack” Gierzynski and VLRS

¹² Oklahoma Senate, *Mandatory Vehicle Inspections Abolished; Repeal Will Save Oklahomans \$12 Million*, May 1, 2001, <https://oksenate.gov/press-releases/mandatory-vehicle-inspections-abolished-repeal-will-save-oklahomans-12-million>.

¹³ Mississippi Legislature, *Senate Bill 2169 (2022 Regular Session): An Act to Reinstate the Mississippi Motor Vehicle Safety Inspection Law*, accessed November 2, 2025, <https://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2022/html/SB/2100-2199/SB2169IN.htm>.

¹⁴ Washington State Department of Licensing, *Clean Car Emissions Requirement*, accessed November 6, 2025, <https://dol.wa.gov/vehicles-and-boats/vehicles/buying-and-selling-vehicle/clean-car-law-emission->.

¹⁵ Tennessee Department of Revenue, *Vehicle Registration*, accessed November 5, 2025, <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/revenue/title-and-registration/vehicle-registration/registration-current.html>.

¹⁶ Division of Air Quality, “Vehicle Emissions Inspections in Texas,” *Texas Commission on Environmental Quality*, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/mobilesource/vim/overview.html>.

¹⁷ New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles, “Inspections & Emissions.”

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Appendix A: Sources for States with Annual Vehicle Safety Inspections

Hawaii Department of Transportation Adoption of Chapter 19-142 Hawaii Administrative Rules (August 10, 2015).

New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles, “Vehicle Inspections,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.dmv.nh.gov/tabbed-content/vehicle-inspections#:~:text=All%20New%20Hampshire%20registered%20vehicles,of%20the%20owner's%20birth%20month>.

New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, *New York State Vehicle Safety/Emissions Inspection Program*, accessed November 2, 2025. <https://dmv.ny.gov/new-york-state-vehicle-safetyemissions-inspection-program>.

North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, *Emissions and Safety Inspections*, July 14, 2025, <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/title-registration/emissions-safety/Pages/default.aspx>.

Maine State Police, “Motor Vehicle Inspections,” Department of Public Safety, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://www.maine.gov/dps/msp/investigation-traffic/crash-investigations/mv-inspections>.

Massachusetts General Court, *Massachusetts General Laws*, Chapter 90, § 7A: Rules and Regulations for Periodic Inspections of Motor Vehicles, (2006).

Pennsylvania Driver and Vehicle Services, *Safety Inspection Program*, accessed October 29, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dmv/vehicle-services/inspection-and-safety-requirements/safety-inspection-program>.

Vermont General Assembly, *Title 23 Motor Vehicles*, § 1222, accessed October 29, 2025, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/23/013/01222>.

Virginia Law, *Code of Virginia*, *Code of Virginia § 46.2-1158: Inspection of Motor Vehicles*, (2020).

Appendix B: Sources for States with Biennial Vehicle Safety Inspections

Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles, *Vehicle Services Inspections*, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://dmv.de.gov/VehicleServices/inspections/index.shtml>.

Louisiana Legislature, *Louisiana Revised Statutes*, § 32:1304: Secretary to Require Periodical Inspection, (2024).

Missouri General Assembly, *Missouri Revised Statutes*, Chapter 307, § 307.350: Motor vehicles, biennial inspection required, exceptions—authorization to operate vehicle to inspection station for inspection—violation, penalty, July 1, 2000.

Motor Vehicle Division, “Vehicle Inspections,” *Utah State Tax Commission*, accessed November 3, 2025, <https://dmv.utah.gov/register/inspections/#:~:text=Vehicles%20six%20years%20old%20and,test%20in%20odd%2Dnumbered%20years>.

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, “About Vehicle Inspections,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.nj.gov/mvc/inspection/aboutinsp.htm>.

Ohio Legislature, *Requirements for Motor Vehicle Owners in the Enhanced Automobile Inspection and Maintenance Program*, August 7, 2021, [https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrativecode/rule37452612#:~:text=\(3\)%20With%20the%20exception%20of,approved%20test%20is%20being%20offered](https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrativecode/rule37452612#:~:text=(3)%20With%20the%20exception%20of,approved%20test%20is%20being%20offered).

State of Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles, *Vehicle Inspection Requirements*, December 17, 2024, <https://dmv.ri.gov/registrations-plates-titles/safety-emissions->.

West Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, *Vehicle Inspection*, accessed November 2, 2025, <https://transportation.wv.gov/DMV/Vehicle-Services/Pages/Vehicle-Inspection.aspx>.

Appendix C:
Sources for States with Safety Inspections Required When Registering an Out-of-State Car in State

Criminal Division, “Vehicle Inspections,” *Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office*, accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.jcsoky.org/criminal-division/vehicle-inspections>.

Iowa Department of Transportation, *Vehicle Inspections for Titling*, accessed November 9, 2025, <https://iowadot.gov/registration-plates/other-vehicle-services/vehicle-inspections#block-onthispage>.

Kansas Legislature, *Kansas Statutes Annotated*, Chapter 8, Article 1, § 8-116a: Vehicle Identification Number; Check of Vehicles by Highway Patrol; Original Kansas Certificates of Title on Out-of-State Vehicles; Check by Designee or Employee of New Vehicle Dealer; Fees and Disposition Thereof, (2024).

Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles, “Vehicle Inspection,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://dmv.nebraska.gov/dvr/title/vehicle-inspection>.

Appendix D: Sources for States with Annual Emissions Requirements

Agency of Natural Resources, “Vehicle Emissions Inspections and Maintenance,” *Department of Environmental Conservation*, accessed November 12, 2025, <https://dec.vermont.gov/air-quality/mobile-sources/vehicle-emissions-inspections#:~:text=Vermont's%20Vehicle%20Emissions%20Inspection%20and,model%20years%20old%20or%20newer>.

Arizona Motor Vehicle Division, “Emissions Testing,” *Arizona Department of Transportation*, accessed November 5, 2025, <https://azdot.gov/mvd/services/vehicle-services/vehicle-registration/emissions#:~:text=If%20your%20vehicle%20is%20in,An%20electric%20vehicle>.

Division of Air Quality, “Vehicle Emissions Inspections in Texas,” *Texas Commission on Environmental Quality*, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/mobilesource/vim/overview.html>.

Georgia’s Clean Air Force, “Important Information About Your Vehicle’s 2025 Vehicle Emissions Inspection,” *Georgia Environmental Protection Division*, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6269ac61c64ade553d4aceed/t/66df1c2b3e8bf012984b6016/1725897771287/GCAF+2025+Registration+Renewal+Insert+English+FINAL.pdf>.

Maine State Police, “Motor Vehicle Inspections,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.maine.gov/dps/msp/investigation-traffic/crash-investigations/mv-inspections>.

Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, “Vehicle inspections,” *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, (2006).

Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles, *Emission Control Program*, March 2022, <https://dmv.nv.gov/pdf/forms/ec002.pdf#:~:text=DRIVING%20NEVADA%20n%20emission%20inspection%20is%20required,a%20Dealer%20Report%20of%20Sale%2C%20180%20days>.

North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, *Emissions and Safety Inspections*, July 14, 2025, <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/title-registration/emissions-safety/Pages/default.aspx>.

Appendix E:

Sources for States with Biennial Emissions Requirements

Bureau of Air Management, “Vehicle Emissions Testing,” *Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection*, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/air/mobile-sources/vehicle-emission-testing>.

Division of Air Quality, “Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance,” *Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control*, July 7, 2025, <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/air/mobile-sources/inspection-maintenance/#:~:text=The%20inspection%20requirement%20is%20biennial,are%20exempt%20from%20emissions%20testing>.

Illinois Vehicle Code Emission Inspection, 625 I.L.C.S. 5 ch. 13c, January 1, 2001.

Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles, *Vehicle Emissions Testing Program*, accessed November 8, 2025, https://www.in.gov/bmv/registration-plates/vehicle-emissions-testing-program/#:~:text=In%20Indiana%2C%20vehicles%20registered%20in%20Lake%20and,four%20latest%20model%20years%20*%20Antique%20vehicles.

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, *Motor Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance*, accessed November 12, 2025, <https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/motor-vehicle-inspection-and-maintenance>.

Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration, “Six-Year Emission Testing,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://mva.maryland.gov/vehicles/Pages/Six-Year-Emission-Testing.aspx#:~:text=Many%20Maryland%20vehicles%20are%20driving,is%20required%20every%20two-years>.

Missouri Department of Revenue, *Chapter 14: Safety and Emissions Inspections and Required Equipment*, August 28, 2019, <https://dor.mo.gov/pdf/Chapter14.pdf>.

Motor Vehicle Division, “Vehicle Inspections,” *Utah State Tax Commission*, accessed November 16, 2025, <https://dmv.utah.gov/register/inspections/>.

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, *Vehicle Inspection FAQs*, 2024, <https://nj.gov/mvc/pdf/inspections/FAQinspection.pdf>.

New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division, “Emission Testing,” accessed November 2, 2025, https://www.mvd.newmexico.gov/vehicles/emission-testing/?_cl=AVfBfGXF3lSaTCD2TiTwu6FW.

Rhode Island Emissions and Safety Testing, *Vehicle Inspection Requirements*, accessed November 12, 2025, <https://www.riinspection.org/Pages/Content.aspx?ID=1>.

State of California Department of Motor Vehicles, *Smog Inspections*, accessed November 8, 2025, <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/vehicle-registration/smog-inspections/#:~:text=You%20need%20a%20smog%20inspection%20when%20you,Gasoline%2Dpowered%20and%20less%20than%20eight%20model%2Dyears%20old>.

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, *Oregon Revised Statutes § 803.212: Vehicles Tested and Exempt*, accessed November 1, 2025, https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_803.212.

Virginia Law, *Code of Virginia, Code of Virginia § 46.2-1158: Inspection of Motor Vehicles*, (2020).

Appendix F:
Sources for States with Inspections of Suspect Motor Vehicles by Law Enforcement

Alaska Administrative Code, t. XIII, chp. 4, art. 1, s. 6, “When Inspection Required; Roadside Inspection.”

Arkansas Code, t. XXVII, chp. 32, s. 101, “Vehicles to be in safe mechanical condition,” (2025 regular session).

Florida Statutes, t. XXIII, chp. 316, s. 610, “Safety of vehicle; inspection,” (2012).

Idaho Statutes, t. LXVII, chp 29, art. 67, s. 2901b, “Inspection of Motor Carriers—Exemptions—Certification of Repair—Compliance Review—Penalties,” (2025 regular session).

Michigan Vehicle Code, chp. 257, s. 715, “Maintenance of equipment on vehicles; stopping and inspecting vehicles; citation for defects in equipment; inspection of vehicles involved in accident; temporary vehicle check lanes,” (1979).

Appendix G:

Sources for States with No Safety for Emissions Inspection Requirements

Minnesota Legislature, *Minnesota Statutes*, Chapter 169, § 169.781: Annual Commercial Vehicle Inspection; Inspectors, Fee, Penalty, accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.781>.

Mississippi Department of Revenue, “Motor Vehicle Registration and Renewal,” accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.dor.ms.gov/motor-vehicle/motor-vehicle-registration-and-renewal#:~:text=If%20you%20own%20a%20vehicle,is%20domiciled%20or%20parked%20over%20night>.

Montana Legislature, *Montana Code Annotated*, Title 61, Chapter 9, Part 5, § 61-9-503: Owners and Drivers to Comply With Inspection Laws, accessed November 2, 2025, https://archive.legmt.gov/bills/MCA/title_0610/chapter_0090/part_0050/section_0030/0610-0090-0050-0030.html.

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South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, *Inspection*, accessed November 2, 2025, <https://www.scdmvonline.com/Business-Customers/Dealers/Dealer-Licenses/Inspection>.

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