

# Driver walk around checks – what to look out for

We all know that drivers are legally responsible for the condition of their vehicle and/or trailer while in use. We also know that carrying out a walk around check before use, and continuously monitoring its condition during use, is vital to achieving this. These checks are an important part of a robust maintenance system, which is your first line of defence when it comes to detecting faults.

But what defects are commonly found, and what areas should be subjected to increased diligence? This Fact Sheet explores the most common defects located during an inspection and their relationship with a drivers' walk around check.



*Outline marker lamp inoperative*

## Defect categories

At the annual test, different vehicle and trailer (asset) components and systems inspected are categorised under sections within the relevant Inspection Manual which describes the deficiency criteria. For enforcement, the same categories are utilised within the Categorisation of Defects Manual, which contains criteria for issuing prohibitions or inspection notices.

Normally, assets would be prepared for annual test, whereas inspections completed for enforcement purposes such as roadside checks would normally encounter assets operationally, ie unprepared. Additionally, enforcement work is frequently targeted towards non-compliant operators utilising the operator compliance risk score (OCRS).

DVSA publish statistics for both annual testing and enforcement showing which defect categories do not meet the minimum standard and either fail the annual test or receive a prohibition.

Logistics UK's vehicle inspection service (VIS) inspects assets in operational environments which are usually not prepared or targeted, defects located are also categorised utilising DVSA categories.

## Defect category comparison

All the inspection types previously described categorise defects in line with the DVSA categories allowing a comparison to be made, see Table 1. A direct comparison is not possible, as the different inspection types are all carried out in varying conditions within the asset's maintenance

Table 1

Ranking order	DVSA Annual Testing Failure 2021-2022 Quarter 4 <sup>1</sup>	DVSA Enforcement Prohibitions 2021 - 2022 Quarter 4 <sup>2</sup>	VIS Roadworthiness Inspection Annual Testing Failure 2022 <sup>3</sup>
1	Condition of tyres	Condition of tyres	Lamps
2	Brake system and components	Direction indicators and hazard warning lamps	Condition of tyres
3	Oil leaks	Brake system and components	Spray suppression, wings and wheel arches
4	Suspension	Lamps	Brake system and components
5	Steering	Steering	Steering

cycle/operational conditions, and some are targeted towards poor operators. For example, when presented for annual test, vehicles are usually prepared.

What is interesting is the trends, notice the condition of tyres is high on the list as is brake system and components. Lamps also feature highly but not at annual test, and steering is included in all inspection types.

### Specific defects

Sticking with the four trending defect categories, analysis of VIS data shows the most common specific defects that are being picked up during inspection.

Table 2

Defect category	Specific defect
Condition of tyres	Tyre cut to cords
	Tyre underinflated
	Tyre exposing cords
Brake system and components	Brake chamber air leak
	Air pipe/hose leaking
	Spring brake chamber not fully operative
Lamps	Outline marker lamp inoperative
	Amber side marker lamp inoperative
	Registration plate lamp inoperative
Steering	Power steering reservoir/hoses leaking
	Track rod/drag link ball joint gaiter defective
	Track rod/drag link ball joint excessive wear

Data source: Logistics UK Compliance Report Statistics 2023

### Driver reportable defects

From this list of defects, we can see that many of them should be detected during a good walk around check. For example, if tyres are damaged or cut, a significant amount of these defects can be seen with a good inspection of the tyre. Underinflated tyres can also be noted through the appearance and how large the bulge is at the bottom in comparison to the others.

With brake system and components, detecting air leaks would eliminate a significant number of defects, and remember that the foot brake needs to be pressed while listening to ensure the system is pressurised to detect leaks.

Whilst it is true that a bulb can go at any time, the popularity of LED lighting on modern vehicles means the reliability should be very good. However, lamps simply not working is a significant finding and is such an easy thing to check.



### Tyre cut to cords

When it comes to steering, other than leaks it would be unreasonable to expect the driver to identify the other most common defects with the steering system which would normally only be detected during a preventative maintenance inspection.

### Routine

Drivers should adopt a routine for their checks that covers the whole of the vehicle without covering areas unnecessarily. The routine should be simple, thorough and repeatable so that it can be carried out easily and efficiently. A little extra focus on the areas mentioned should help improve these statistics and keep your fleet compliant at all times.

### Drivers must...

- Ensure **all** lights are checked for operation.
- Check all tyres thoroughly for damage, exposed cords and correct inflation.
- With full air pressure, make sure there are no air leaks both with the foot brake on and off.

### References

- 1 [www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/commercial-vehicle-testing-data-for-great-britain](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/commercial-vehicle-testing-data-for-great-britain)
- 2 [www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/vehicle-enforcement-data-for-great-britain](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/vehicle-enforcement-data-for-great-britain)
- 3 Logistics UK Compliance Report 2023