

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

September 2025

Fuel mileage improvement

Think smarter, go farther

Brake Safety Day parks 400

When someone else's
training impacts compliance

How to reinstate a driver
after assessment failure

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Think smarter, go farther

The cost of fuel is one of a carrier's biggest operational expenses. A vehicle that travels 100,000 miles (or more) per year and averages less than 7-8 miles per gallon uses a lot of fuel. Do the math!

How your drivers operate their vehicles and manage their everyday driving practices have a real impact on fuel conservation. Both can help reduce costs and have an impact on overall results.

Fuel economy vs. fuel efficiency

With diesel prices changing all the time, as a carrier you need to do everything possible to get the maximum performance from your fleet and the most for your money in fuel economy.

One important factor to remember is the difference between fuel efficiency and fuel economy.

Fuel economy refers to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) objective measurement for how much fuel a vehicle uses on one gallon, or the distance per unit of fuel. Think of it as, "how far can I go per gallon?"

We typically refer to this as miles per gallon (MPG). This measurement fluctuates among vehicle makes and models but is mainly impacted by the engine itself.

Improving fuel economy typically means focusing on maintaining gaskets, valves, sparkplugs, tire pressure, and other engine-specific improvements.

Fuel efficiency, on the other hand, is a broader term that focuses more on how well a vehicle is using its fuel, or the energy use per unit of output. Think of this as, "how well is fuel being used?"

Drivers don't have much impact on this metric, as it's mainly up to vehicle engineers and manufacturers to improve the fuel efficiency of the vehicle itself. A hybrid vehicle may be one example of fuel efficiency in action.

How your drivers play a role

Any fuel mileage improvement measures your company takes can be quickly overridden by poor driving habits. Your drivers' role is to harness the techniques you offer them while focusing on common sense, good judgment, and intelligent decision making. This can lead to as much as a 10 percent increase in your miles per gallon rating. ♦



Lucero Truszkowski

Lucero Truszkowski joined J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. as an Associate Editor in 2022. Lucero edits, writes, and researches content on a variety of topics, including transportation, human resources, and driver training. She holds a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — FUEL MILEAGE

High-efficiency driving saves fuel

With the volatility of fuel prices, getting the most miles per gallon out of your vehicles is more important than ever. As a carrier, you should encourage drivers to adjust how they drive, how much their vehicle idles, and how well they maintain their vehicles. Each of these components helps get the best out of a vehicle when it comes to fuel economy.

TIP: Check your company's policies on fuel efficiency. Some companies have additional requirements specific to their employees.

Fuel improvement strategy

Your drivers have a big impact on how efficiently their truck's fuel is used. With some helpful tips, they can easily improve fuel mileage across the entire fleet. The main elements to focus on include driving practices, idling, and vehicle maintenance.

Driving practices

- **Smooth and steady:** Rapid acceleration and braking wastes fuel. The faster the acceleration, the more fuel is burned. Also, every time a driver accelerates, slows, and then reaccelerates, the more fuel gets burned. According to U.S. Department of Energy data, this type of driving can lower mileage by about one-third.
- **Speed:** Drivers should strive to maintain an even speed by using the vehicle's cruise control when operating in good weather conditions on open highways and flat terrain. In most cases, maintaining an even speed will save fuel. Drivers should keep in mind that traveling at faster speeds uses more fuel. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, while each vehicle reaches its optimal fuel economy at different speeds or ranges of speeds, mileage usually drops at speeds over 50 miles per hour.
- **Progressive shifting:** Progressive shifting is the practice of keeping the shifting revolutions per minute (RPMs) low in low gear and increasing the shifting RPMs as you work through the gears. Changing gears at lower RPMs requires less fuel. The higher the RPMs, the more fuel being burned.
- **Watch your weight:** Additional weight can reduce fuel economy. Drivers should remove unnecessary items that may add weight to the vehicle.
- **Trip planning:** Often, the most fuel-efficient route is the one with the fewest miles and flattest terrain.

Drivers should avoid urban areas during rush hour, mountainous routes when practical, and deadhead and empty miles whenever possible.

- **Stops:** Encourage drivers to shorten their stops when possible. It's more fuel efficient to start a warm engine than a cold engine.

Idling

An idling truck engine uses about one gallon of fuel per hour. The EPA estimates that, on average, a long-haul truck idles for 1,800-2,400 hours per year. Using an estimate of \$4.00 per gallon for diesel fuel, this adds up to between \$7,200 and \$9,600 per year per truck.

Some helpful ways to reduce idling include:

- Shutting off the engine when no one is in the vehicle,
- Eliminating idling time when waiting, and
- Keeping engine cool-down time at the end of the day to a minimum.

Currently, just under half of all states have idling laws. Most of these laws limit idling to a short period of time ranging from 3-15 minutes. There are also many municipalities that have their own idling laws.

TIP: Don't forget to remind your drivers about warm-up and cool-down idling times to keep the engine at peak condition.

Vehicle maintenance

Section 396.3 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) requires every motor carrier to regularly inspect, repair, and maintain all vehicles in its control.

As well as being a regulatory requirement, routine maintenance can contribute to an overall fuel conservation program. Oil, fuel, and air filters should be changed according to the vehicle manufacturer's specifications. Dirty filters can decrease fuel efficiency.

Fluid levels should also be checked regularly. Low fluid levels can lead to additional draw on the engine due to additional friction in the components that help reduce fuel mileage. Drivers must also regularly inspect fuel system integrity. Problems in the fuel system must be corrected early, as leaking fuel lowers mileage. ♦

TIP: Close the meeting with a Q&A session to help your drivers understand the material and fill in any gaps they may have missed.



TRAINING HANDOUT — FUEL MILEAGE

Inspect your specs!

As well as being mandated in Parts 392 and 396 of the FMCSRs, routine vehicle inspection is another preventive maintenance tool that should be used to conserve fuel.

- **Wheel bearings and seals:** Wheel bearings that are not being properly lubricated will increase the rolling resistance of the wheel, reducing fuel mileage. Inspect the wheel assemblies and axles for grease and oil leaks.
- **Brakes:** Brakes that are dragging or not releasing correctly can reduce fuel mileage. Trying to accelerate or maintain speed while the brakes try to slow the vehicle or keep it stopped will lead to decreased fuel mileage.
- **Aerodynamics:** Items attached to the vehicle can reduce aerodynamic performance and in turn reduce fuel economy. Avoid attaching items to the vehicle that can reduce aerodynamic performance. Also consider aerodynamics when loading flatbed trailers.
- **Tires:** Tires need to be checked regularly. An under-inflated tire increases rolling resistance and wear. This can reduce mileage by 2-5 percent. Checking tires when cold (before you drive) with an accurate gauge is the most effective way to check tire pressure. Refer to the manufacturer's specifications for the correct pressure, inspect the tires for excessive wear, and make sure the right type and size of tire is on the vehicle. ♦



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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — FUEL MILEAGE

1. An idling truck engine uses about ____ gallon(s) of fuel per hour.
 - A. One-half
 - B. One
 - C. Two
 - D. None of the above

2. As a driver, your habits have a big impact on fuel mileage.
 - A. True
 - B. False

3. Which of these factors play into good driving practices for fuel economy?
 - A. How much time you spend in the sleeper berth
 - B. Which gas stations you choose from
 - C. Maintaining an even speed when possible
 - D. Both A and B

4. Mileage usually drops at speeds over 30 miles per hour.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. Stop and start driving can lower mileage by about ____ at highway speeds.
 - A. One-quarter
 - B. One-half
 - C. One-third
 - D. Double ♦

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

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One-day brake-up call parks 400

Nearly 400 commercial vehicles were sidelined during an unannounced one-day brake safety inspection on April 22 across Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Of the **4,596** inspections, **398** vehicles (8.7 percent) were cited with brake-related violations and immediately placed out of service, restricting the drivers from further travel.

This is a decrease from last year's Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) Brake Safety Day, which resulted in 11.6 percent of vehicles placed out of service.



The annual unannounced brake safety event placed special emphasis this year on vehicle drums and rotors, which accounted for **14** of the out-of-service violations.

Brake violation highlights

During Brake Safety Day 2025:

- **4,596** inspections were conducted.
- **4,171** (91.3 percent) of commercial vehicles did not have brake-related out-of-service (OOS) violations.

- **398** (8.7 percent) of commercial vehicles had brake-related OOS violations.
 - **237** vehicles (59.5 percent) met the 20-percent defective brake criterion.
 - **112** vehicles (28.1 percent) had other brake violations (worn brake lines, air leaks, broken brake drums, inoperative low-air warning device, etc.).
 - **77** vehicles (19.3 percent) had brake hoses/tubing violations.
- **32** vehicles (8 percent) had drum/rotor violations (this year's focus).
 - **14** vehicles were placed OOS for this violation.

Drum/rotor focus data

The 2025 Brake Safety Day focus was brake drum/rotor health and safety, which can affect a vehicle's brake efficiency or become dislodged and damage other vehicles if not functioning properly.

Inspectors found:

- **8** broken rotors on air disk brakes.
- **12** rusted rotors on air disk brakes.
- **4** rusted rotors on hydraulic brakes.
- **8** broken drums on S-cam brakes. ♦

When someone else's training impacts your compliance

When motor carriers train their employees, they have control over curriculum and standards and can set reminders for refresher training. But there are times when a motor carrier must rely on someone else's training.

As a result, motor carriers should know whether their service providers are properly credentialed and trained.

Brake and annual inspectors

The regulations require that motor carriers only permit qualified personnel to inspect, service, and repair commercial motor vehicle (CMV) brakes and perform annual vehicle inspections.

Brake and annual inspectors must understand and be able to perform their tasks, and this is accomplished through experience, training, or both totaling at least one

year. This experience and/or training is often accomplished through outside training programs, commercial garages, apprenticeship programs, and the like.



When the inspector is an employee, the carrier can easily verify the inspector's background. However, it becomes an issue when the individual is employed by a third party (e.g., a commercial garage). The carrier should reach out to their service provider to ensure only qualified fleet maintenance personnel are working on their CMVs. In fact, motor carriers are instructed in 396.19(b) to retain evidence that

a technician meets the annual inspector qualifications — even if the task is outsourced. As best practice, similar

evidence should be requested and retained for brake inspectors who are not employees.

D&A service agents

Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol (D&A) testing is a complex topic, so DOT requires specific training of most service agents. Agents must retain documentation on their employees' training.

Drug specimen collectors and alcohol testing personnel must:

- Be trained in DOT regulations and collections procedures,
- Demonstrate proficiency through mock tests, and
- Take refresher training once every five years.

If a technician's actions result in a canceled drug or alcohol test, they must have error-correction training to address the specific mistake.

Substance abuse professionals (SAPs) must:

- Have one of six counseling credentials,
- Participate in training related to safety-sensitive positions,
- Pass a comprehensive exam through an approved organization, and
- Take continuing education courses every three years.

Medical review officers (MROs) must:

- Be a licensed physician;
- Receive training related to collection and lab procedures under Part 40;
- Complete an examination administered by an approved MRO organization; and
- Complete requalification training, including another exam, at least every five years.

Carriers are allowed to ask for documentation on training of these service providers.

Unlike other key players in DOT testing, consortium/third-party administrators (C/TPAs) have no mandatory training. But this should not deter the motor carrier from asking their C/TPA to provide information on employee training, experience, and continued education. ♦



Next Month's Topic: Paperwork management

Keeping track of required paperwork can be a lot for drivers to manage. Knowing what's required in the vehicle, as well as what can be stored electronically and what must be available as a physical document, will help your drivers stay compliant and organized. ♦

Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question: Effective 6/25/25, if a driver is placed out of service for failing one or both parts of the English Language Proficiency assessment, how would a driver be reinstated to drive again? Do they have to pass an assessment? Who provides the assessment to see if they pass?

Answer: A driver who is placed out of service (OOS) will not be able to drive again until they can meet the English standard in 391.11(b)(2). There is no deadline or test they would need to pass before driving again, other than the next roadside inspection. If they are inspected again and cannot meet the standard, they could be cited and placed OOS again and could be cited for violating the OOS order from the prior inspection, which is a rather serious offense. Violating an OOS order is grounds for losing driving privileges (i.e., being disqualified under 383.51).

A driver who improves their English enough to meet the standard could voluntarily ask an enforcement officer to administer another roadside English test, as a way to be sure the driver is actually meeting the standard, but there is no requirement that drivers get tested in that way before driving again. If you feel that a driver's English has improved enough to meet the standard, then you can allow them to drive again. It's a bit of a double-edged sword because there's no way to be sure they're meeting the standard until they undergo and pass another inspection. ♦

Expert Help

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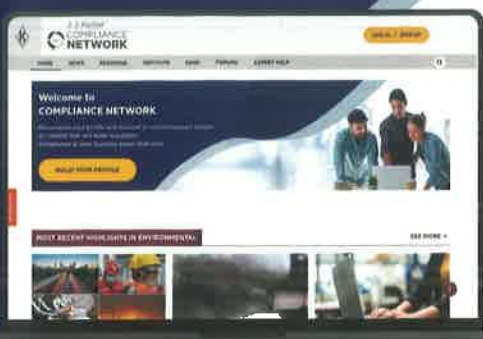
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