

FMCSA Offers Web-Based Training Course on Detecting Leaks from Natural Gas and Propane Commercial Motor Vehicles

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) offers an online training course on leak detection in commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) fueled by natural gas (compressed or liquefied) and propane (also known as liquefied petroleum gas). While this course was designed for CMV inspectors, it may be useful to owners or operators of natural gas and propane CMVs, or others who may be exposed to these types of vehicles.

The fuel system is one of 14 safety-critical systems of a CMV. A defect in a safety-critical system, such as a leak in the fuel system, can be grounds for placing a vehicle out of service. Unlike a conventional diesel fuel leak, a natural gas leak may not be detected by the human senses. Thus, a combustible gas detector or bubble leak test is necessary to confirm a leak of natural gas or propane.

The course helps inspectors:

- Identify vehicles powered by natural gas or propane.
- Become familiar with the unique characteristics and leak properties of these fuels.
- Identify the major components of each type of fuel system, including those most likely to leak.
- Detect fuel leaks.
- Know what to do if a vehicle has a fuel leak.

The last training objective addresses how to use a combustible gas detector to confirm a fuel leak.

The course is available at http://infosys.fmcsa.dot.gov/Leak_Detection/story_html5.html.

The course is approximately two hours in length and includes two modules with content, graphic displays and a video demonstration of selected detectors. There are knowledge checks throughout the training. A text-only manuscript of the training is available for download in the "Related Documents" section. This training application functions optimally when viewed in Google Chrome or Safari. Certain functionalities related to the interactive knowledge checks and post-quiz review may be limited in Internet Explorer or Firefox.

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Offsite Safety Audit Rollout Expanded

By Joe Bennett, *Transportation Specialist, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation*

In an effort to conduct audits more cost effectively and efficiently without compromising safety, the New Entrant Offsite Safety Audit Program expanded to an additional 12 states, plus Washington, D.C., this past summer. This kick-started the phased nationwide rollout of the offsite safety audit. The Offsite Safety Audit Program provides states with another way to conduct safety audits for carriers that do not have known safety issues and do not transport passengers or hazardous materials.

Currently, 78 percent of new entrants pass an onsite safety audit, but the same resources are used for those carriers as for carriers that need additional attention. Offsite safety audits allow agencies to more efficiently audit carriers whose performance indicates an understanding of and compliance with regulations.

The offsite safety audit, developed by a joint working group of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) personnel and state partners, enables auditors to remotely evaluate a new entrant motor carrier's basic safety management controls. Carriers submit documents electronically or via fax or email, which are then reviewed by auditors. Six states (Alaska, California, Florida, Illinois, Montana and New York) participated in the test program between July 2013 and December 2014, and found that it saved both time and money by reducing travel. Offsite safety audits reduced travel costs by 58 percent in test states without negatively affecting safety.

In Vermont, for example, offsite safety audits allow auditors and carriers to save time and money when conducting audits on Canadian motor carriers. If carriers are eligible for an offsite safety audit, they don't have to take a day off for a scheduled onsite audit. They can submit their documents without having to lose any time behind the wheel.

Beginning June 2015, more than 150 auditors and managers from Washington D.C., Georgia, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming were trained on the offsite safety audit process. The hands-on training occurred over two and a half days in an on-site course that provided real-life scenarios to help auditors and managers better understand the policies governing the offsite safety audit process. In addition, the training reviewed the new IT system used to manage all audit assignments, review carrier documentation submissions and conduct offsite safety audits.

In July 2015, following the offsite safety audit training, the New Entrant Mentoring Program was launched to provide a support system for auditors and managers who were conducting offsite safety audits for the first time. Managers from the new entrant offsite safety audit test states serve as mentors, sharing best practices and answering questions as needed.

The Offsite Safety Audit Program will continue to add states over the next three years. Additional states are planned to begin implementing the offsite safety audit in winter 2016. ■