

Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program?

The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program is part of Missouri's continuing effort to improve air quality in the St. Louis region. The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program is a combined emissions testing and safety inspection program for vehicles registered in the St. Louis ozone nonattainment area. The nonattainment area includes St. Louis City and Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles and St. Louis counties.

Why is the emissions testing program changing?

In the summer of 2005, the department convened the Emissions Inspection and Maintenance (I/M) Summit to bring the St. Louis community together to consider and build consensus for a redesign of the vehicle emissions I/M program in St. Louis. Based upon the consensus of the I/M Summit, the Missouri General Assembly passed Senate Bill 583 in 2006. As a result of this legislation, the Gateway Clean Air Program, the centralized emissions inspection and maintenance program, ends Sept. 1. The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program will transition during the month of September to allow participating shops ample time to become familiar with the software and equipment necessary to perform the emissions test. The program will begin Oct. 1. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the Missouri State Highway Patrol will jointly administer the Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program.

Why does my vehicle need to be tested?

Motor vehicles are a leading source of air pollution in the St. Louis area due to the large number of vehicles on the road and amount of miles traveled daily. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated the counties of St. Charles, St. Louis, Franklin, Jefferson and St. Louis City as an ozone nonattainment area. The area does not meet the federal health-based air quality standards for ground-level ozone, a strong lung irritant.

The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program will be an important part of the eight-hour ozone plan designed to bring the St. Louis area into attainment by June 2010. The federally-required I/M program is designed to reduce passenger vehicle emissions.

Studies show those most affected by poor air quality are those with respiratory illnesses. When passenger vehicle emissions react with heat and sunlight, ground-level ozone is formed. Because ground-level ozone is highly reactive, high concentrations can cause

throat irritation, congestion, chest pains, nausea and labored breathing for anyone exposed to this pollution. Ozone can also aggravate the breathing of those with lung or heart conditions. Performing repairs on the vehicle before emissions issues worsen will help reduce ground-level ozone. Everyone benefits from improved air quality when the release of excessive vehicle emissions are prevented.

Are vehicles operating more cleanly today than ever before?

Vehicles manufactured in 2007 are designed to operate more cleanly than the new vehicles of 1970. Vehicle manufacturers have complied with more stringent emissions standards set by the federal government each year. New emissions devices combined with unleaded fuel have improved vehicle emissions during the past 37 years; however, manufacturers still have no control over routine maintenance of a vehicle once it leaves the dealership.

Vehicles 1995 and older registered in the nonattainment area make up 20 to 23 percent of the vehicle fleet in 2007. The impact on ground-level ozone from these older vehicles will continue to decrease as these vehicles become a smaller percent of the fleet and are phased-out.

Which vehicles will require emissions testing?

The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program will only test gas-powered vehicles 1996 and newer and diesel-powered vehicles 1997 and newer that are registered in the St. Louis ozone nonattainment area. The program will also test vehicles with at least 51 percent of their annual miles driven in the ozone nonattainment area, regardless of where the vehicle is registered.

The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program will emissions test even model year vehicles during even calendar years and odd model year vehicles during odd calendar years. An emissions test is also required any time an eligible vehicle undergoes a title change.

Which vehicles will not require emissions testing?

All vehicles that do not contain on-board diagnostic computer equipment will be exempt from the emissions testing requirements, however a safety inspection will still be required. Safety inspections are required biennially regardless of calendar or model years.

Exempted vehicles include

- 1995 and older gas-powered vehicles;
- 1996 and older diesel-powered vehicles;
- New motor vehicles, not previously titled and registered, for the four-year period following their model year of manufacture, with fewer than 40,000 miles at the first required biennial safety inspection;
- New and unused vehicles, with model years within two years of the calendar year, that have odometer readings of less than 6,000 miles at the time of original sale by the manufacturer or dealer; and
- Motor vehicles that are driven fewer than 12,000 miles between biennial safety inspections.

Other exemptions include

- Motorcycles and motortricycles;
- Vehicles powered by fuels other than gasoline, ethanol or diesel;
- Vehicles that are domiciled and operated exclusively in an area of the state not subject to the emissions inspection requirements;
- Historic Vehicles registered pursuant to section 301.131 RSMo;
- School buses;
- Tactical military vehicles; and
- Visitor, employee or military personnel vehicles on federal installations provided appointments do not exceed 60 calendar days.

How do motorists know when to have their vehicles emissions tested?

The Missouri Department of Revenue will continue to mail vehicle registration papers 60 days prior to plate expiration to notify motorists when to have their vehicles emissions tested and safety inspected. Vehicles with an even model year are tested in even years, and vehicles with an odd model year are tested in odd years. An emissions test is also required any time an eligible vehicle undergoes a title change. At the time of the title transfer, the seller is required to provide the purchaser with a valid emissions inspection compliance certificate or compliance waiver.

Where can I go to have my vehicle emissions tested?

The state will license auto shops in the St. Louis area to conduct the emissions testing. All currently licensed safety inspection stations are encouraged to participate in the program.

What is required of local auto shops to participate in the program?

To participate, local auto shops will apply to the state for an emissions inspection license. Licensed stations will conduct emissions inspections and have the option to repair failing vehicles. The cost of the station license is \$100 per year, and will be prorated the first year the business is licensed so safety and emissions inspection station licenses can be synchronized.

Emissions inspectors will also be licensed with the state. The emissions inspector license is valid for three years and provided at no cost. The contractor will train all emissions inspectors. The inspectors will be required to pass a written and practical exam offered by the Missouri State Highway Patrol. The licensed emissions inspection stations are required to obtain Internet connections to facilitate real-time, paperless vehicle registration verification. They are also required to purchase their inspection equipment from the state's contractor.

How are vehicle emissions tested?

The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program will use On-Board Diagnostics or OBDII testing to conduct the emissions test. This testing method accesses an advanced computer system installed in all 1996 and newer gas-powered and 1997 and newer diesel-powered vehicles 8,500 pounds or less in Gross Vehicle Weight Rating. OBDII is an early-warning system that continually monitors the vehicle's emissions-control devices and other engine-related components to ensure all are functioning properly.

When the vehicle is presented for an emissions test, an inspector will attach a connector cable to the OBD port generally located below the dash on the driver's side of the vehicle. The OBD information will be sent to the computer. Any emissions-related OBD diagnostic trouble codes or other OBD failures will be printed on the Vehicle Inspection Report.

OBDII systems provide valuable emissions information that allows motorists to invest in needed repairs and preventive maintenance to ensure that their vehicle continues to perform efficiently. The outcome of the Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program will be cleaner cars on the road and cleaner air for everyone to breathe. For more information about the emissions test, see the OBDII fact sheet on the department's Web site at <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/gatewayvip/docs/obdfactsheet.pdf>.

Are safety inspections still required by the state?

Safety inspection requirements are not changing. The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program combines the safety inspection and emissions testing requirements for vehicles registered in the St. Louis ozone nonattainment area. Model year vehicles 1995 and older are not subject to the emissions portion of the program, but are still subject to all safety inspection requirements. Any auto shop that currently performs safety inspections may continue to offer safety only inspections and may choose not to participate in the Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program.

What is the cost of an emissions test?

The emissions testing fee shall not exceed \$24, and the safety inspection fee shall not exceed \$12. The station shall determine the acceptable forms of payment. The fees shall include one free reinspection, if the same licensed station conducts it within 20 business days.

How long is my emissions test valid?

Once a vehicle receives a passing emissions test, the test is valid for registration purposes for 60 days. If the vehicle owner allows the emissions test to expire, the vehicle will have to be reinspected.

If my vehicle fails, where can I go to have it repaired?

Anyone may perform necessary repairs for the vehicle. Customers are not required to have repairs completed at the station that performs their vehicle's emissions test. It is important to note that waiver criteria may affect where a motorist chooses to have repairs performed.

What is required for retesting my vehicle?

If your vehicle has been repaired, it's time to get ready for a retest. Retests are required until your vehicle passes or until you obtain a cost-based waiver from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Once repairs are completed, the vehicle must return to the initial testing station within 20 business days to qualify for one free reinspection. After 20 business days, you will be required to pay the full emissions test fee again.

The vehicle owner must present a completed repair data sheet that is filled out and signed by whomever repaired the vehicle. This information will be used to provide performance ratings for Missouri Recognized Repair Technicians as well as facilitate cost-based waiver issuance.

Before you retest...drive your repaired vehicle normally for several days before returning to the station that initially performed the emissions test. Doing so can help reset your vehicle's readiness monitors. For more information on readiness monitors, see the On-Board Diagnostics (OBDII) fact sheet available on the department's Web site at <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/apcp/docs/obdfactsheet.pdf>.

Are waivers available and who is eligible to receive one?

Yes, there are three waivers offered to vehicle owners that fail the emissions test. The waivers include cost-based, out-of-area and reciprocity.

Cost-based emissions waivers are available if a motorist has spent more than \$450 on emissions-related repairs and labor. However, labor costs can only apply toward the waiver amount if a Missouri Recognized Repair Technician performs the repairs. If the vehicle owner performs the repairs, the owner must spend at least \$400 in qualified emission-control parts toward the waiver amount.

If vehicle owners are financially dependent solely on state and federal disability benefits or other public assistance programs and anticipate failing the emissions test, they may receive a waiver. The vehicle owner must provide reasonable and reliable proof to the department 30 days in advance of their vehicle's anticipated failure. The vehicle owner must spend at least \$200 on emissions-related repairs and labor to qualify.

Out-of-area waivers are also available. If a vehicle is registered in the St. Louis ozone nonattainment area, but operating outside of that area for the next 24 consecutive months, owners may apply to the department for an out-of-area waiver.

Finally, reciprocity waivers are available. If a vehicle is in a state other than Missouri and that state conducts pass/fail OBD testing, the motorist may choose to have the vehicle emissions inspected in that state and submit a reciprocity waiver application to the department.

Vehicle owners must apply for all emissions waivers with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. To apply please visit www.GatewayVIP.com and complete the appropriate waiver request form.

What if I purchase a used vehicle?

State law requires automobile dealers to sell vehicles that will pass the emissions test. The dealer may choose to test the vehicle prior to the sale and provide the motorist with the passing emissions test or a cost-based waiver. Purchasers should understand that if the vehicle received a waiver, it will likely fail future emissions tests. If the dealer chooses not to provide either a passing test or waiver, the owner should get the vehicle tested within 10 days or 1,000 miles of the purchase date. Should the vehicle fail the emissions test, the owner may return it to the dealer for repairs needed to get it to pass the emissions test (no waivers allowed). If the dealer cannot get the vehicle to pass the emissions test, the dealer must reach another agreement with the vehicle owner.

State law requires private sellers of vehicles to provide the purchaser with a current emissions test approval or waiver for the vehicle prior to the sale. The vehicle purchaser has 60 days from the date of the emissions test to register the vehicle. For more information, see the Consumer Protection Information for Used Car Buyers fact sheet on the department's Web site at <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/gatewayvip/docs/consumerprotection.pdf>.

I had my vehicle tested last year when I purchased it; why do I have to test it again this year?

The Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program tests even-model year vehicles biennially during even calendar years and odd-model year vehicles biennially during odd calendar years. An emissions test is required any time an eligible vehicle undergoes a title change. In some cases, when a used vehicle is sold, an emissions test may be required in two successive years.

For example, if a 2000 vehicle is purchased in 2007, the seller is required to provide a passing emissions test to the buyer to register the vehicle. The seller, not the buyer, should pay for the test that occurs in 2007. In 2008, the vehicle would be required to pass another emissions test paid for by the new owner based on the even model year testing schedule. In this instance, the vehicle was required to have an emissions test in two successive years. However, the vehicle would not be scheduled for another emissions test until 2010.

Now that my vehicle has passed its inspections, how do I renew my license?

Vehicle owners may register online at www.plates.mo.gov. The Department of Revenue will mail your renewal stickers soon after they finalize your online renewal. You should allow 10 days for your stickers to arrive and plan your renewal accordingly. Vehicle owners should apply the stickers properly to their license plates. The stickers are proof that the vehicle owner has renewed their license, not the online confirmation. The vehicle owner can also visit a license fee office for vehicle registration and plate renewal purposes. For a list of Missouri Department of Revenue's contract license fee offices, visit <http://www.dor.mo.gov/mvdl/offloc>.

For more information call or write

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