

May 16 Old Autos Article on new "Safety Standards"

Further to my recent letter to the editor, urging car hobbyists in Ontario to check out the new upcoming changes to safety standards, and the "one issue before my letter" article that went more in depth to the subject, I have answers. I've included my email address at the end of the column, in case anyone has questions that I'll try my best to answer. I'm a mechanic in an 11 bay shop, licenced since 1985.

As I write this I've just returned from a seminar put on by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. In my previous letter, I mentioned I wanted to see how these upcoming changes would affect the old car hobby, and hot rods. Although a few questions were asked by members of the audience, I stuck around afterwards to ask the actual enforcement officer questions of my own. What was good to know was that in addition to being an enforcement officer, he's also a licenced mechanic.

The very first item I need to address is the big myth that's been spreading, and I was guilty of spreading it too. Raised, and lowered ride heights will NOT automatically disqualify a vehicle from getting its safety standards certificate. As long as the suspension is safe, whatever method of raising or lowering is properly done, and nothing interferes with movement of the wheels, it's good. Wheel spacers, unless they're original equipment, are not allowed. Bolt-on wheel adapters are allowed.

The big question I had for him, regarding suspensions, had to do with hot rods. YES! You are still able to graft a Nova or Camaro subframe to an earlier chassis. YES! You are able to convert your front suspension to a Mustang II type. YES! You are able to build that '32 Ford reproduction, but it will have to be registered as a kit, or home made car. As long as the work is properly done. He said a suspension is a suspension, as long as it does the job it was originally intended to do.

In the on-line guidelines, I pointed out that the new standards suggested we are now limited to a certain size of floor repair, that can't go up the side sills. I asked about the one piece floor assemblies now available, or even reproduction floor sections, and can we get away with them? His answer was yes, as long as it's properly installed (meaning welded in, no more pop rivets) and makes the vehicle as structurally sound as it was when built. He pointed out the diagram in the guidelines suggests how it should be done properly.

Along with the inspection, every vehicle gets a report on the various systems, with things such as fuel level, tire pressure, mileage after the inspection, brake component measurements all noted. If some items didn't pass the inspection, as it is now, within 10 days the vehicle can be re-inspected, at no cost, with repairs noted on the original form. There may be a charge if the wheels need to be removed.

Mufflers have to conform to original equipment standards, meaning they have to control noise, and emissions. His example was the DynoMax box states that the muffler inside conforms to OE standards, so that's acceptable. What isn't acceptable is a straight pipe, glasspacks, or "Hollywood" style mufflers. I have to admit, I haven't heard that term in a while!

Every vehicle will need a road test. It will need to be driven to at least 40 KPH, given full lock turns in either direction, driven over a bump he said the equivalent height of a 2X4, and at least one hard stop.

Shops will now need a window tint meter. Windows must not be less than 70% transparency. After January 1st, 2017, NO aftermarket tints on windshields. I believe the current standards don't want anything on the windshield anyway. Speaking of windshields, there can't be any flaws in the areas swept by the drivers, and passenger's wipers.

All measurements will now be in metric. As for tires, 2 millimeters is now the limit on any one area of a major tread groove.

Leaks are now termed in categories of 1, 2, and 3. 1 is evidence of seepage. 2 is a leak, but not leaving drops at the time of inspection. 3 is dripping at the time of inspection. Different systems are affected by their category, and can be grounds for a fail.

Parking brakes: they are to be tested for performance, and operation. In the case of a rear disc system, with parking brake shoes within the hub of the disc, it's only what's visible externally. We're not to dismantle the rear brakes to inspect the parking brake assemblies. At the moment, there are no standards for parking brake shoe thickness.

If your vehicle is equipped with stability control, it has to work. The dash light (or telltale) can't be on. Oddly enough, the ABS light can be on, but it will be noted on the form. However, if on the road test (especially if it's a Chevy truck) the ABS kicks in just as you're about stopped, and keeps rolling while the system buzzes, and the brake pedal makes your foot dance, then it's a fail. The cause of that, by the way, is usually rust buildup under where the front wheel speed sensor is bolted to the wheel hub, pulling the sensor ever so slightly away from the tone ring. The cure is to remove the sensor, clean the rust from its mounting base, apply a light film of grease, then re-install the sensor. Of course, by that time the sensor is very seized in place, and will come out of its hole in pieces.

Here's the link to the complete standards: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/trucks/pdfs/passenger-light-duty-vehicle-inspection-standard.pdf>

Your best bet, as always, is to go talk to the mechanic you'll be bringing your vehicle to, and get their input. If your vehicle isn't licenced yet, see if that shop has a dealer plate so they can do the road test.

As always, the Ontario safety standards certificate is a guideline for MINIMUM standards, at the time of inspection! 2mm is the minimum allowable thickness for brake friction material, and tires. Depending on how the vehicle is driven, that could wear away to nothing very quickly.

I hope this has helped, and cleared up any misconceptions about the upcoming changes beginning July 1st. I'm always happy to help, or hear from you, write me at 1962jmk@gmail.com

John Kelly

