

**MARYLAND MOTOR HOME/RECREATIONAL VEHICLE DRIVER'S  
LICENSE PRE-TRIP INSPECTION – BASIC CONTROL SKILLS – PUBLIC  
ROAD GUIDE**

This guide is designed to assist you in preparing for your pre-trip inspection of your motor home/recreational vehicle (RV). The pre-trip inspection will focus on testing your knowledge of obvious items that indicate the vehicle is safe to operate on public roads. It also provides information relating to basic skills and public road testing.

During your pre-trip inspection of your vehicle, you will be required to inspect the following:

**External Check:**

**Leaks:** You will be required to look for fluid leaks from your vehicle. Fluid loss could indicate component failure in areas where levels might not be readily checked (i.e., transmission or fuel systems).

**Tires:** You will check for proper inflation, tire condition (checking for cuts or other damage to tires), and tread depth. Too much or too little air pressure results in bad wear of tires. The tire cannot have any fabric showing through the tread or sidewall.

**Rims:** Rims must not be damaged and tires must be mounted properly. Damaged rims can result in loss of a tire from the rim, loss of a wheel from an axle, or the loss of air pressure in a tire.

**Lug nuts:** You will be required to check to ensure that all lug nuts are present and not loose. Loose or missing lug nuts could result in the loss of a wheel.

**Fuel tank:** The fuel tank must be securely mounted, with no leaks. Leaks present a potential fire hazard and may create hazardous conditions for other motorists.

**Exhaust system:** Check that it is securely mounted, with no damage or signs of leaks. Leaks in the exhaust system may cause asphyxiation of the driver or passengers.

**Headlights (high & low beam):** You will be required to demonstrate that headlights are working properly (both high & low beams). Headlights must be clean and none should be missing or broken. Working headlights are necessary for the safe operation of the vehicle.

**Rear lights:** You also will be required to demonstrate that rear lights are working properly, are clean and none are missing or broken.

**Brake lights:** You will be called upon to demonstrate that all brake lights are clean and working properly, and that none are missing. You may ask the examiner for assistance in checking the external brake lights. Like headlights and rear lights, brake lights are necessary to the safe operation of the vehicle.

**4-way flashers:** You will be required to show that your vehicle's flashers are clean and working properly, and that none are missing. Four-way flashers also are important safety devices for your vehicle.

**Directional signals:** You must demonstrate that all directional signals (left/right, front/rear) are working properly.

**Rear of Vehicle (doors, hinges, latches):** You will be required to show that the doors and hinges are not damaged, operate properly and latch securely.

**NOTE:** If any colored lights are missing or broken, proper color lens repair paper is authorized. However no white light is to shine from the area where repair paper is used.

### **Internal Check:**

**Seats:** You will be required to show that the seat frame is not broken, that there are no springs protruding through the operator or passenger seats, and that the seats are firmly attached to the floor.

**Safety belt:** Your vehicle must have safety belts that are properly secured and mounted. Safety belts should not be ripped or frayed.

**Windows:** You must demonstrate that the windows operate properly. There should be no obstructions or damage to the windows of your vehicle.

**Windshield:** There must be no cracks in the windshield within wiper areas, illegal stickers (i.e., stickers are not permitted within the wiper areas), or obstructions to the view. Cracks, stickers, glare, and dirt can cause the driver to lose sight of other vehicles and changes in road conditions.

**Doors:** You must be able to show that doors open and close properly and are not damaged. Both the driver and passengers must be able to safely get in and out of the vehicle.

**Mirrors:** Mirrors may not be cracked or broken and must be properly mounted since they provide visibility to the sides and the rear of the vehicle, enhancing your view of traffic, especially in blind spots.

**Wipers & washer fluid:** Wiper arms and blades must be secure, undamaged, and operating properly. Your vehicle must contain washer fluid.

**Heater:** A working heater is important to prevent frost or condensation from forming on the windshield of the vehicle. You must show that the heater works properly. The heat must be turned on and airflow must be felt to show that the vents are not blocked.

**Air conditioning:** You must show that the air conditioning is in proper working order by turning it on and placing a hand where the airflow comes out to show that the vents are not blocked.

**Defroster:** A defroster improves visibility, especially during cold weather. You will be required to show that the defroster works properly by turning it on and placing your hand where the airflow comes out to show that the vents are not blocked.

**Horn:** You will be required to demonstrate that the horn works properly. The horn is a device that must function properly in order to warn other traffic of your presence (e.g., cars, pedestrians, and bicyclists).

**Indicator lights:** You will be required to show that all indicator lights (hazard, dashboard, directional signals, and high beam) are operational.

**Gauges:** You must be able to show that oil pressure, temperature, fuel and alternator gauges are in proper working order.

**Emergency equipment (F-E/C-T):** You must show that the fire extinguisher is properly charged and secured. You will be required to check for spare electrical fuses (if used) or identify circuit breakers, and to check for red reflective triangles.

**Parking brake (“tug test”):** With the parking brake engaged, you will be required to check to ensure that the parking brake will hold the vehicle by lightly trying to pull forward with the parking brake on. This important safety feature will prevent the vehicle from rolling and causing damage to other vehicles or injury to pedestrians or other motorists.

**A VEHICLE TOWING A RECREATIONAL TRAILER (or other towed trailer/vehicles) ALSO MUST INSPECT THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL ITEMS:**

**Coupling System:**

**Coupled by a 5th wheel:** You will be required to inspect the plate on which the trailer rests and secures the trailer kingpin. You also will be required to check the fifth wheel skid plate for proper lubrication.

**Mounting bolts:** Loose or missing bolts may cause movement between the frame and the coupling assembly, resulting in handling and stability problems on turns and curves. Loose bolts could break off, resulting in loss of the trailer. Therefore, you will be required to show that the bolts that hold the fifth wheel, pindle hook or other type of hitch mounts to the tractor frame or truck are present and secured.

**Locking jaws:** Locking jaws maintain a secure connection around the kingpin and connection of the trailer. You will be required to look into the fifth wheel gap and check to ensure that the locking jaws are fully closed around the kingpin.

**Safety latch:** This device keeps the hitch release lever/latch closed and/or the trailer chained to the vehicle. You will be required to show that the safety latch is secured.

**Coupled by a pindle hook, ball hitch, etc:** You will be required to inspect the locking mechanism for missing or broken parts and make sure that it is locked securely. If present, safety cables or chains must be secure and free of kinks and excessive slack. Improper connection with the power unit can result in handling problems, rollover, or separation of the power unit and trailer.

**Air/electric lines:** These lines connect air supply and electrical power to the trailer. You must check to ensure that all connections are locked in place and free of damage. Loss of air to the trailer could result in a partial or total loss of braking to the towed unit. Damaged electrical lines may result in loss of brakes, brake lights, and/or vehicle lights.

**Air brake check** (air brake-equipped vehicles only): Air brake safety devices vary. These procedures are designed to make certain that a given device is operating correctly as air pressure drops from “normal” to “low air” conditions. The driver must perform all three air brake checks correctly in order to receive credit for the air brake portion of the pre-trip inspection.

**The proper procedures for inspecting the air brake system are as follows:**

With the air pressure built up, you will shut off the engine, chock the wheels, if

necessary, release the parking brake(s) and the vehicle protection valve (combination vehicle) and fully apply the foot brake. After stabilization of the air gauge, you will be required to hold the foot brake for one minute. You must check the air gauge to see that the air pressure drops no more than three pounds in one minute (single vehicle) or four pounds in one minute (combination vehicle) and listen for air leaks.

Without re-starting the engine, you will turn the key to the “on” or “battery charge” position. Next, you will begin to “fan off” the air pressure by rapidly applying and releasing the foot brake. Low-air warning devices (buzzer, light, flag) should activate before air pressure drops below 60 psi or the level specified by the manufacturer.

You will continue to fan off the air pressure. At approximately 40 psi on a combination vehicle (or level specified by the manufacturer), the power unit protection valve and parking brake valve should close (pop out). On other combination vehicle types and single vehicle types, the parking brake valve should close (pop out).

**Special Note:** Air brake check procedures vary from vehicle to vehicle and different drivers may have learned different procedures, however, all procedures are designed to confirm that the correct safety devices operate at the appropriate times as the air pressure drops from “normal” to “very low”. Not all valves will pop out, but an audible discharge of air should be heard.

**Hydraulic brake check (if equipped):** You must pump the brake pedal three times, and then hold it down for five seconds. The brake pedal should not move (depress) during the five seconds. If the vehicle is equipped with a hydraulic brake reserve (backup) system, with the key off, you will be required to depress the brake pedal and listen for the sound of the reserve system electric motor.

### **Points Necessary To Pass Pre-Trip Inspection:**

Drivers with a single vehicle without air brakes must accumulate 24 points to pass (with air brakes, 25 points must be accumulated to pass).

Drivers of combination vehicles without air brakes (trailer over 10,000 pounds being towed) must accumulate 28 points to pass (with air brakes, 29 points must be accumulated to pass).

All drivers must complete the air brake procedures correctly to pass the pre-trip inspection, if the driver’s vehicle is equipped with air brakes.

**You have twenty minutes to complete your pre-trip inspection.** If your inspection is not completed within twenty minutes your test is scored as a failure.

If you fail the pre-trip inspection you may not proceed any further.

## BASIC CONTROL SKILLS TESTING

You must successfully pass the pre-trip inspection to move on to the basic control skills testing.

For the basic control skills test, you will demonstrate your ability to maneuver your motor home/RV. You will receive points for pull-ups and crossing over or touching boundary lines or cones. **Hitting a cone, jumping a curb, or hitting an object will result in automatic failure.**

You will be tested on the following maneuvers:

**Straight line backing** (lane is 12' wide, 100' in length): You must be able to back down the alley (lane) without touching the boundaries of the alley. You must keep your entire vehicle, including your mirrors, inside the lines. When the front of your vehicle is past the end marker, stop, set your brake and sound your horn. You have 5 minutes to complete this maneuver; time will start once instructions have been given.

You will be scored on encroachments and pull-ups (see below). Encroachment consists of crossing over any boundary lines with any portion of the vehicle. Pull-up results when you change directions to re-position your vehicle. Hitting a cone, jumping a curb or hitting an object will result in automatic failure.

**Offset Backing to the Right:** You will drive forward (straight ahead) to the boundary line and stop your vehicle. When instructed, you will back your vehicle into the opposite lane until the front of your vehicle has passed the first set of cones.

On this maneuver, you also will be scored on pull-ups and encroachments. The vehicle must be positioned inside the opposite lane and pass the first set of cones to complete this maneuver.

### **Points Necessary To pass The Basic Control Skills Test:**

You will lose one point each time you are charged with a pull-up or encroachment. **An accumulation of 10 points or an automatic failure (i.e., hitting a cone, jumping a curb, or hitting an object) will result in disqualification.**

If you fail your basic skill maneuvers testing, you may not proceed any further.

## **PUBLIC ROAD DRIVING TEST**

You will drive over a test route that has a variety of traffic situations. At all times during the test, you must drive in a safe and responsible manner.

During the driving test, the examiner will be scoring you on specific driving maneuvers, as well as on your general driving behavior. You must follow the directions of the examiner. Directions will be given to you well in advance. You will not be asked to drive in an unsafe manner. You will be tested and scored on the following:

### **TURNS:**

- You must check traffic in all directions.
- Use turn signals and safely move to the turn lane.
- Slow down smoothly, change gears, if necessary.

You must be aware of the traffic around you and be able to communicate with other drivers. Gradual slowing allows you time to properly set up for a turn, make gear changes as needed, and obtain proper speed to maintain control of your vehicle.

### **If you must stop before making the turn:**

- Come to a smooth and complete stop behind the stop line, crosswalk, or stop sign.
- If stopping behind another vehicle, stop where you can see the rear tires on the vehicle ahead of you (to maintain a safe gap).
- Do not let your vehicle roll.
- Keep the front wheels aimed straight ahead.

Allow enough space to maneuver in case of an emergency or stalled traffic. Stopping before the stop line will allow you to see the area in front of vehicle. Pedestrians and other traffic must be visible to you. Being able to observe the rear wheels of the vehicle in front of you allows the proper gap between your vehicle and that vehicle.

### **When ready to turn:**

- Check traffic in all directions.
- Keep both hands on the steering wheel during the turn (do not “palm” the wheel).
- If the vehicle has a manual transmission, do not change gears during the turn.
- Keep checking your mirror to make sure the vehicle does not hit anything on the inside of the turn.
- The vehicle should not move into oncoming traffic.
- The vehicle should finish the turn in the correct lane.

Safe operation of the vehicle requires both hands on the wheel unless shifting or operating other controls. You should minimize the space on the right side of your vehicle so that traffic cannot pass. Your vehicle must not hit the curb or other objects on the right side. You should maintain the position of your vehicle in the middle of the lane as much as possible while turning.

**Complete turn:**

- Check traffic to the left and right.
- Make sure the turn signal is off.
- Get up to the speed of traffic, use turn signal, and move into right-most lane when safe to do so (if not already there).

You must make regular checks to see where the vehicle is tracking and to be aware of the traffic patterns that flow around the vehicle. You should cancel your signal so that other drivers do not get confused. Accelerate smoothly and maintain speed. Whenever possible, you should be traveling in the right-most lane.

**INTERSECTIONS:**

**As you approach an intersection:**

- Check traffic thoroughly in all directions.
- Decelerate gently.
- Brake smoothly and, if necessary, change gears.
- Come to a complete stop behind any stop signs, signals, sidewalks, or stop lines, maintaining a safe gap behind any vehicle in front of you.
- Your vehicle must not roll forward or backward.

**When driving through an intersection:**

- Check traffic with eye movements to the left and right.
- Make eye contact with other drivers and pedestrians.
- Use mirrors to check traffic to the rear.

**URBAN/RURAL HIGHWAY STRAIGHT SECTION:**

**Regular Traffic Checks:**

- Watch for hazards, such as vehicles pulling out from driveways or store entrances.
- When approaching intersections, check cross-traffic to the left and right.

- Check mirrors every 8 to 10 seconds.
- Anticipate lane changes, slow for hazards or obstructions.

A constant visual search around the vehicle will alert you to any changes in road conditions. You should watch for vehicles slowing, stopping, turning, and for areas of reduced visibility. You also must check for pedestrians or other traffic traveling alongside your vehicle that may enter a blind spot. You should be aware of branches or limbs hanging out into the roadway, or other obstacles that may hit the top of the vehicle.

### **CURVE:**

- You should reduce speed before entering a curve.
- You should not have to brake or downshift while in the curve.
- You should be able to maintain your speed in the curve.

Drivers inexperienced with the operation of a particular type of vehicle often misjudge the maximum speed with which they can negotiate a curve of a given radius. Excessive speed prior to the curve often requires hard braking in the curve which, when combined with the outward force of the curve, creates a very hazardous situation. At the other extreme, drivers whose handling skills are deficient may slow too much to keep the vehicle in the lane while negotiating the curve. Speed adjustments need to be made prior to the curve to allow drivers time to concentrate on the curve.

### **INTERSTATE (HIGHWAY DRIVING):**

#### **Merge On:**

- You should perform a traffic check in the front and rear of your vehicle and especially to the left (blind spot) when merging onto the interstate.
- Use your turn signals appropriately.
- Maintain appropriate space between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you (i.e., do not tailgate).
- You should make no unnecessary stops.
- Check traffic before and during your merge onto the interstate.
- Stay in the acceleration lane while increasing your speed. Do not cross over solid painted lines early and make no hard (sharp) turns onto the roadway.
- Move to the center of the lane.
- Cancel your signal after entering your driving lane.

Due to increased stopping distance needed for large vehicles, such as motor homes/RVs, your vehicle's following distance must be adjusted to allow you to safely stop. Stopping on a merge lane creates a hazardous situation for other motorists who are attempting to

accelerate to existing traffic speed. Your vehicle should travel as close to the highway speed as possible, without exceeding the speed limit. A heavy vehicle's slow acceleration, coupled with its large space requirement, makes it important that drivers use the acceleration lane to gain as much speed as possible to minimize disruption to traffic flow.

### **Driving on the highway:**

- Perform traffic checks.
- Remain in your lane.
- Maintain a safe speed and following distance.

You must use your vehicle's mirrors to check traffic all around you. Scan ahead and check for indications of a 7 to 15-second lead-time, which will permit you to anticipate lane changes and to slow for hazards or obstructions as soon as they are seen.

### **Lane:**

- Stay in the right lane, if clear.
- Use the center lane if using the right lane requires constantly changing lanes (i.e., due to a high volume of entering/exiting traffic).

Staying as far to the right as possible will keep hazards to the left side of the vehicle where you have better visibility.

### **Speed:**

- You should maintain a speed that is appropriate considering existing traffic, the weather, and road conditions, **without exceeding the posted speed limit.**
- You should be able to see hazards or obstructions in time to avoid continual slowing, stopping, and accelerating.
- Your speed should remain steady and should not impede traffic.

Drivers should operate within the posted speed limit, if conditions permit, without exceeding the speed limit. Driving too slow obstructs traffic and is an indicator that the driver's ability to handle a large vehicle is marginal.

### **Following Distance:**

- Avoid having your forward view blocked by large vehicles. If other large vehicles block the view, increase your following distance.

Motor homes/RVs require increased stopping distance. Therefore, you must adjust your following distance to permit you to safely stop your vehicle and to allow others driving

behind you to safely stop.

**Lane Change:**

- Check front and rear, especially the area around the lane into which you are moving.
- Activate proper turn signal and maintain the signal until your vehicle is in the new lane.
- Maintain a safe gap with an even change of lanes.
- Cancel your signal.

**Exit:**

- Check traffic ahead, to the rear, and especially to the right (your vehicle's blind spot) before and as the vehicle enters the deceleration lane.
- Use turn signal appropriately.
- There should be no hard (sharp) turn into the deceleration lane.
- You should maintain a proper following distance. Do not tailgate on the ramp.
- Decelerate in the exit lane.
- Cancel your vehicle's signal.

**RAILROAD CROSSING:**

Railroad crossings can be a serious safety hazard to vehicles and should be approached with caution. Due to the length of most motor homes/RVs and the speed at which these vehicles can safely cross a railroad track, a large vehicle needs ample time to complete a crossing. You must slow down before the entering the crossing and pay special attention to any warning signals or control arms. **Look and listen for approaching trains.**

## **GENERAL DRIVING BEHAVIOR:**

Each time poor driving behaviors are observed, your score will be negatively affected. These poor driving behaviors are:

- Improper steering (you should have both hands on the wheel, no over/under control).
- Failure to obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Accidents, traffic violations, etc.
- Causing the vehicle to drive on sidewalks, through a pedestrian crosswalk while pedestrians are walking through it, failing to maintain control in your lane, exceeding stops lines, etc.

**Some infractions are so serious that the occurrence of any one of these infractions during the test will result in an automatic failure:**

- Committing a moving violation.
- Having an avoidable accident.
- Committing a dangerous action or unsafe behavior.
- Failing to come to a complete stop at a stop sign.
- Failing to yield when it is appropriate to do so.

## **POINTS:**

An accumulation of 19 points or committing one or more of the five serious infractions referenced above during the road test will result in failure.

## **UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE TESTING PROCESS:**

Once testing has been successfully completed, you will receive a noncommercial license of the appropriate class containing one of the following restrictions:

In the case of a Class B noncommercial license, you will receive a “J” restriction: **“Class B RV Authorized Only.”**

In the case of a Class A noncommercial license, you will receive a “J” restriction: **“Class A/B RV Authorized Only.”**

To remove the restriction in order to operate additional noncommercial/commercial Class A and/or B vehicles, you must obtain the appropriate learner’s instructional permit and be tested in the appropriate class vehicle (other than a recreational vehicle).