

INFORMATION BULLETIN



January 8, 2004

LOW AIR WARNING DEVICE INSPECTION PROCEDURES

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) has received questions from the truck and bus industry regarding application of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance North American Standard Out-Of-Service Criteria as it applies to the operation of the low air pressure warning signal required by Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 121.

FMVSS 121 S5.1.5 (Warning Signal) states that trucks and buses equipped with air brake systems shall be equipped with the following: "A signal, other than a pressure gauge, that gives a continuous warning to a person in the normal driving position when the ignition is in the 'on' ('run') position and the air pressure in the service reservoir system is below 60 psi. The signal shall be either visible within the driver's forward field of view or both audible and visible."

It is important to remember that when checking the low-air warning signal activation pressure using the system pressure gauge, it is also necessary to allow a tolerance for gauge accuracy. However, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance North American Standard Out-Of-Service Criteria requires the motor vehicle to be placed out-of-service for failure to meet the listed criterion. FMVSS 121 is a performance-oriented standard and does not specify an inspection procedure to determine compliance.

CHP inspection personnel utilize more than one method to determine compliance with the applicable standards. Policy contained in HPM 82.6, Commercial Enforcement, directs on-highway inspection personnel to inspect the low air warning signal with the engine running. The driver then operates the brake pedal until the low air warning system is activated. The inspector notes the air gauge reading for compliance.

Motor Carrier Specialist (MCS) personnel conducting in-depth terminal inspections test each portion of the dual circuit air brake system to accomplish this task. The low air warning device for the front and rear service brake systems is inspected independently to ensure full compliance with FMVSS 121. Failure of either portion of this dual circuit system to activate the low air warning device also meets the listed criteria to place the motor vehicle out-of-service. This in-depth inspection is utilized to better evaluate the effectiveness of the carrier's preventive maintenance practices, and is consistent with the specific requirements of FMVSS 121.

CHP inspection personnel also utilize the following inspection procedures when inspecting a commercial motor vehicle equipped with an air brake system conforming to

the FMVSS 121 standard. They will inspect the low air warning device with the engine running and the parking brake released. Next, they repeatedly apply and release the brake pedal until the low air warning system is activated and note the air gauge reading for compliance. The motor vehicle will be placed out-of-service if it fails to meet the operational criteria.

Next, in order to complete the in-depth inspection procedure, inspection personnel check for proper activation of the low air warning signal for the front and rear service brake systems individually. If the low air warning signal for either the front or rear service brake system fails to activate or activates at or below 51 psi, the motor vehicle will be placed out-of-service pursuant to Title 13, California Code of Regulations, Section 1230(a) (FMVSS requires the pressure gauge be accurate to within seven percent of the system cut-out pressure).

Questions concerning information contained in this Information Bulletin should be directed to Mr. Mike Ellis, CVS, at (916) 445-1865.

ENFORCEMENT SERVICES DIVISION

OPI: 062

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