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by Justin Metz on April 9, 2021We all know the importance of having a reliable, well-running vehicle. But with so many complex moving parts in modern cars, trucks and SUVs, it's not uncommon to have underlying problems you may be unaware of. To catch any issues before they result in a breakdown, most auto dealers, mechanics and service centers offer a multi-point inspection. This service is a comprehensive evaluation of nearly every component of your vehicle. They can also be called a courtesy check, vehicle inspection, maintenance inspection or pre-purchase inspection (if it's done before you buy a used car). As a vehicle owner, it makes a difference to do your research and think ahead - whether that's shopping for auto insurance or knowing when to get a multi-point inspection. Here's what to know about the latter. There are plenty of reasons to get a multi-point inspection. For starters, it's a key element of preventative vehicle maintenance. Knowing the condition of your vehicle can help you catch and address potential issues before they lead to dangerous failures or costly repairs. And because most multi-point inspections evaluate your vehicle on a rating scale (green = good; yellow = needs repaired soon; red = needs repaired now), it provides you with the information needed to plan and budget for repairs in the future. What is checked during a multi-point inspection? The specific elements of your inspection may vary depending on where you take a vehicle for service. But generally, you can expect most of these components to be evaluated: Under the hood Engine oil: In gas-powered vehicles, oil lubricates an engine's internal parts to help reduce friction and wear. During an inspection, a technician will check to ensure your oil is clean and filled to the appropriate level. While some oil use over time is normal, consistently low oil levels can be a sign of a leak. And dirty oil should be changed to maximize engine protection and performance. Coolant: Your car's cooling system protects the engine from running too hot, which can cause significant damage. An inspection of your cooling system will include checking the radiator and coolant hoses for leaks. Your antifreeze should also be clean and filled to the appropriate level. Learn what to do if your car overheats. Brake fluid: In a hydraulic braking system, brake fluid provides the force needed to apply your brakes. This fluid should be clean and full, as it goes bad over time. Power steering fluid: Similar to brake fluid, this hydraulic fluid is used to build the pressure that operates your vehicle's power steering rack. Air filter: An engine's air filter ensures no debris makes its way inside your engine. Like any filter, it can get clogged over time, which reduces engine performance. Drive belts: Rubber serpentine belts drive multiple components in your engine bay, including the power steering pump, alternator and air conditioning compressor. As your belt ages, cracking can lead to a broken belt. And a loose belt can make a loud squealing noise. Hoses: There are a number of rubber and metal hoses in an engine bay that carry fluids to your car's engine and other critical components. During an inspection, the technician will check for any leaks that could cause problems down the road. Battery: A battery supplies the electricity needed to start and operate your vehicle. By conducting a battery voltage test, a technician can give some insight into the overall health of your battery. They may also check your alternator to ensure it's properly charging your battery while the engine is running. A dead battery tops our list of 7 reasons your car won't start. Washer fluid: Most drivers have experience filling their washer fluid tank. This quick check will ensure you've got enough fluid to clean your windshield when needed. Safety Equipment Seat belts: Safety restraints, such as seat belts, will be checked for proper operation. Airbags: A technician may use a vehicle code scanner to check for any issues with your car's airbag system. Given the recent string of airbag recalls, they can also let you know if any need to be replaced (any recall-related repair will be paid for by the vehicle manufacturer). Horn: A quick honk is all that's needed to validate that your horn is in working order. Brakes: The condition of your brakes has a huge impact on your vehicle's stopping power. Brake pads will be inspected for wear (this determines how much life they have left) and rotors will be checked for warping, rust or other damage. Interior/Exterior Lights: Headlights, Taillights, Turn signals. They should all be burning bright. If not, the bulbs can be replaced. Wipers: Cracked or broken windshield wiper blades can leave you with a streaky view when rain starts to fall. Learn when and how to replace your windshield wipers. Floor mats: This may sound strange, but improperly installed floor mats have led to serious accidents over the years (this includes installing aftermarket floor mats on top of the mats that came stock with your vehicle). If your mat gets caught under the accelerator or brake pedal, you could find yourself in an unsafe situation. Cabin air filter: In the same way your engine air filter cleans the air going into your engine, a cabin air filter keeps dust and debris from coming through your car's vents. If it's dirty or clogged, it should be replaced. Air conditioning: Your AC will be checked to ensure it's blowing cold. Drivetrain Engine performance: One of the most important checks is evaluating the overall performance of your engine. To do this, a technician will use a code scanner to read any error codes from the vehicle's computer. If your car isn't running smoothly, they'll also evaluate the car's idle speed and ignition system (spark plugs and wires), while checking for any oil leaks that may impact performance. Transmission/clutch: It's the job of your transmission to apply power from the engine to the wheels. If you have an automatic transmission, a technician will check the condition of your transmission fluid and evaluate whether the car is shifting smoothly from one gear to the next. If you have a manual transmission (stick shift), your clutch will also be tested for proper engagement. Differential/transfer case: On your car's axle, a differential helps to split power from the transmission to both drive wheels. If you have a four-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive vehicle, you'll also have something called a transfer case (this transfers power to the front and rear axles). These components will be checked for any fluid leaks, which could indicate a bad seal. Driveshaft/U-joints/CV joints: These components connect your car's transmission to the differential. The parts of your vehicle will vary depending on whether it's front-wheel drive (FWD), rear-wheel drive (RWD), all-wheel drive (AWD) or four-wheel drive (4WD). Regardless of your vehicle type, they'll be checked for wear, which can lead to noise and vibration when driving. Fuel lines/brake lines: Metal fuel lines move gasoline from your car's gas tank to the engine, while brake lines move hydraulic fluid from under the hood to the four corners of your vehicle. If you live in a climate that gets snow (and road salt) in the winter, rust can become an issue for these metal parts. They'll be checked for any leaks or damage. Exhaust: The steering wheel for smooth operation and responsiveness. Listen for clicking or popping sounds when turning. Inspect shocks and struts for leaks or wear. Check vehicle ride height and alignment. Test for clunking or knocking sounds when driving over bumps. Inspect exhaust pipes for rust, holes, or loose parts. Listen for any unusual exhaust noises. Ensure all brackets and hangers are intact and secure. Confirm that the vehicle tracks straight without pulling. Check tire wear patterns for signs of misalignment. Verify that the steering wheel is centered when driving. Look under the vehicle for any oil leaks. Check for coolant puddles or drips. Inspect the ground for signs of transmission or brake fluid leaks. Make sure reflective triangles or flares are included. Ensure a well-stocked first aid kit is present. Confirm that jumper cables are in good condition. Check that a flashlight is functional and has fresh batteries. Perform a multi-point vehicle inspection every 5,000 miles or with each oil change. Additionally, check your vehicle before long road trips or if you notice any unusual behavior. A multi-point inspection is designed to be comprehensive, covering various essential components that contribute to a vehicle's performance, safety, and longevity. Here's a breakdown of the key elements typically included in a Multi-Point Inspection: Fluid Levels: Checking and topping off essential fluids such as engine oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid, coolant, and power steering fluid are fundamental aspects of a multi-point inspection. Adequate fluid levels are crucial for the proper functioning of various vehicle systems. Tire Inspection: This involves assessing the condition, tread depth, and inflation of all four tires. Uneven wear patterns, bulges, or cuts in the tire sidewalls are also examined to ensure safe driving conditions. Brake System: Inspecting the brake pads, rotors, calipers, and brake fluid is essential for ensuring the vehicle's stopping power. Any signs of wear or degradation are addressed promptly to prevent brake failure. Suspension and Steering: Examining the shocks, struts, springs, and other suspension components ensures a smooth and stable ride. Additionally, checking the steering system for proper alignment and responsiveness is crucial for vehicle safety. Battery and Charging System: Assessing the battery's condition, and terminals, and checking the charging system's output help prevent unexpected breakdowns due to a faulty electrical system. Lights and Signals: Ensuring all exterior lights, including headlights, brake lights, turn signals, and dashboard indicators, are functioning correctly contributes to overall safety. Belts and Hoses: Inspecting the condition of belts and hoses is crucial to prevent failures that could lead to engine damage. This includes the timing belt, serpentine belt, and various hoses throughout the vehicle. Air Filter and Cabin Filter: Checking and, if necessary, replacing the air filter and cabin filter contribute to improved air quality inside the vehicle and enhance engine efficiency. Exhaust System: Inspecting the exhaust system for leaks, rust, and damage ensures that harmful emissions are properly filtered, and the vehicle complies with environmental standards. Fluid Leaks: Identifying and addressing any fluid leaks, whether it be oil, coolant, or transmission fluid, is essential for preventing potential damage to the vehicle and maintaining a clean and safe driving environment. While the multi-point car inspection process inherently covers a broad range of components, the use of a checklist provides several advantages. Here are some compelling reasons why incorporating an effective Multi-Point Inspection checklist: Systematic Approach: A checklist ensures that no aspect of the inspection is overlooked. Technicians can follow a systematic approach, ticking off items as they are inspected, reducing the likelihood of human error and oversight. Consistency: Consistency is key in the automotive industry. A checklist helps standardize the inspection process, ensuring that each vehicle undergoes the same thorough examination, regardless of the technician performing the inspection. Time Efficiency: With a well-organized checklist, technicians can efficiently move through the inspection process. This not only saves time but also allows for a more streamlined workflow in busy automotive service centers. Documentation: Checklists provide a tangible record of the inspection, serving as a valuable document for both the technician and the vehicle owner. This documentation can be useful for tracking maintenance history and identifying recurring issues. Customer Transparency: Using a checklist can enhance transparency when communicating with customers. A documented list of inspected items, along with any identified issues, helps customers understand the condition of their vehicle and the scope of recommended repairs or maintenance. Improved Efficiency: A checklist streamlines the inspection process, reducing unnecessary steps and ensuring that all critical areas are covered. This leads to faster service times and improved customer satisfaction. In summary, a Multi-Point Inspection checklist is an essential tool for ensuring thorough vehicle examinations, maintaining consistency, and improving efficiency in automotive service centers. It allows service centers to handle more inspections, 2. Consistency and Standardization: Enforces a standardized approach to inspections. Ensures every technician follows the same checklist. Facilitates the identification of trends and maintenance of service quality. 3. Real-Time Data Entry: Eliminates the need for data transfer from paper to computer. Enables technicians to input findings directly into a digital platform. Provides immediate access to inspection results for technicians and customers. 1. User-Friendly Interface: Boasts an intuitive and easy-to-use platform. Prioritizes simplicity without compromising functionality. Facilitates a smooth transition for technicians accustomed to traditional methods. 2. Customizable Checklists: Offers customizable inspection templates for various digital vehicle inspection makes and models. Ensures inspections are tailored to the unique needs of each vehicle. Enhances the comprehensiveness of inspections. 3. Integration with Other Systems: Goes beyond basic inspections by supporting API integrations with other work order systems. Provides real-time API connectivity to business intelligence tools. vehicle inspection software with checklist by visualogiq Visualogiq digitizes inspections, streamlines custom checklists, generates professional reporting, and adapts to your team and inspection workflows. Sign up for Visualogiq and download a free 7-point multi-point vehicle checklist from our Public Template Library to kickstart your digital inspections transformation. By understanding the components covered in a multi-point inspection sheet, recognizing the importance of using a checklist, and exploring the features of the 7 Multi-Point Inspection sheet, automotive professionals can elevate their maintenance practices and offer customers a higher standard of service. Embracing these advancements not only ensures the well-being of vehicles but also strengthens the bond between service providers and their customers, fostering trust and satisfaction in the ever-evolving automotive landscape. What is a 12-point inspection? A 12-point inspection is a thorough evaluation of your vehicle. Technicians examine the following items: Fluid levels: Check oil, coolant, brake fluid, and power steering fluid. Tire rotation and balance: Rotate tires and check for proper wear. Wiper blades: Inspect and replace if necessary. Belts and hoses: Check for cracks and leaks. Brakes: Inspect pads, rotors, and calipers. Steering: Check for play in the steering wheel and suspension. Alignment: Adjust if necessary. Cabin air filter: Replace if dirty. Battery: Check voltage and terminals. Exhaust: Check for leaks and proper operation. What is a 5-point inspection? A 5-point inspection is a more focused examination of five key areas in a vehicle. The specific points may vary, but commonly inspected components include fluids (oil, brake fluid, etc.), tires, brakes, lights, and the battery. This streamlined inspection is often used for quick assessments or routine maintenance. What are the inspection points in a car? Inspection points in a car are specific components, systems, or areas that are examined during an inspection to assess their condition, functionality, and overall performance. These can include but are not limited to fluid levels, tires, brakes, lights, suspension, steering, battery, and underhood components. What is the purpose of a multi-point inspection (MPI) performed on a vehicle? The purpose of a multi-point inspection (MPI) is to conduct a thorough examination of various components in a vehicle to ensure its safety, reliability, and optimal performance. This comprehensive inspection covers key areas such as fluids, tires, brakes, lights, and more. The goal is to identify potential issues early, prevent breakdowns, and address maintenance needs promptly, contributing to the longevity and safety of the vehicle. What is the last item on the vehicle starting checklist? The last item on a vehicle starting checklist often involves ensuring that all dashboard warning lights illuminate and then turn off as part of the initial system check. This confirms that the vehicle's onboard computer system is functioning correctly and that there are no immediate issues detected. Is a multi-point inspection a state inspection? No, a multi-point inspection is not the same as a state inspection. A multi-point car inspection is a comprehensive examination of various vehicle components to assess its overall condition, while a state inspection is a mandatory inspection required by some jurisdictions to ensure that a vehicle meets specific safety and emission standards set by the state. State inspections typically have a specific checklist that must be followed to determine if a vehicle is roadworthy and compliant with state regulations.

