



More States Are Using OBD for Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance Programs

Vehicle inspection and maintenance (I/M) programs are adopting state-of-the-art technology for model year (MY) 1996 and newer vehicles.

The Clean Air Act requires inspection and maintenance (I/M) programs to incorporate on-board diagnostic (OBD) testing as part of vehicle emission inspection. A majority of the 33 state and local areas that require vehicle emission tests have now moved forward to incorporate the use of OBD technology for vehicle inspections.

Jeff Holmstead, Assistant Administrator of EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, observes that, "I applaud the states that are conducting OBD checks to implement what EPA has determined to be a reliable I/M test for 1996 and newer vehicles. For motorists, OBD checks are a simple and convenient method of identifying vehicles in need of repair. On the national and local level, OBD is an important tool in improving air quality and helping states to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards." The OBD check efficiently incorporates the capabilities of the OBD

system to speed the testing process, provide specific information to the technician to help get repairs done correctly, and maximize the air quality benefits of an I/M program.

The real-world experiences of states already using OBD in their inspection programs, coupled with EPA studies, are highlighting the benefits of OBD testing and providing us with additional hard data that supports inclusion of OBD into operating programs. OBD offers significant air quality benefits, short inspection time for the consumer, and an accurate diagnosis of needed repairs. Repair costs of OBD-failed vehicles are comparable to that of traditional tailpipe tests.

OBD is designed to monitor vehicle operation and detect problems as soon as they occur. Early detection of problems makes warranty coverage programs more effective. Detecting and repairing problems early can also prevent more costly repairs later. OBD provides specific information to refer the repair technician to the proper repair procedure.

Background

The current fleet of more than 200 million vehicles driving on U.S. highways is a major source of air pollution, accounting for approximately 77 percent of the

carbon monoxide and 45 percent of the nitrogen oxides in our nation's air. If not properly maintained, these vehicles will not perform as originally designed, causing them to work harder, wear out faster, and pollute more.

Today's vehicles are highly sophisticated and highly efficient. All 1996 and newer cars and trucks have an advanced powertrain control computer which uses second generation OBD technology to manage and monitor the operation of the engine and transmission. This computer is faster and more powerful than a space shuttle's navigation computer. It keeps your engine running at peak efficiency and will alert you to any potential emission problems.

I/M programs have been in place in state and local areas for many years to help identify vehicles that are in need of repair and therefore exceeding emissions standards. OBD is available only on model year 1996 and newer vehicles. A significant, but declining, portion of the fleet is still pre-1996. EPA will continue to support traditional tailpipe testing and will continue to monitor OBD's performance as vehicles age.

For more information on OBD and vehicle I/M programs, visit EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/otaq/obd.htm.