

LPPD's Truck Inspection Unit Helps Keep Roadways Safe



Officer Robyn Gallion performs a roadside vehicle inspection

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Anyone who drives in southeast Harris County is familiar with the heavy amount of commercial truck traffic that shares our roadways. With three major port facilities in the immediate area and another in nearby Galveston, the amount of container-hauling 18-wheelers alone can appear to make up nearly half of the traffic on any given thoroughfare. The high volume of cargo-truck traffic is compounded by the tremendous amount of tanker-style trucks coming and going from the many local chemical manufacturing plants in the area. Fortunately, the La Porte Police Department maintains a 6 member Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement & Inspection Division (C.V.E.).

According to the CVE division's unit supervisor, Sergeant Rod Davis, the primary mission of these 4 full and 2 part-time officers "is to keep our roadways safe." "We do our best to make sure that the CMV's travelling through La Porte follow the rules, are not over their weight limit, and are being properly maintained", Davis said. In order to accomplish this, each of the officers assigned to the unit have undergone several weeks of specialized training, whereupon they become certified by the Texas Department of Public Safety to conduct Commercial Vehicle Inspections.

Once certified, each CVE officer randomly selects and thoroughly inspects several vehicles each day. Foremost in this process is ensuring that both the driver and vehicle meet the necessary state and federal commercial vehicle safety regulations. Vehicles and drivers that fail to meet these regulations are cited and may be placed out-of-service, so they cannot continue operating until they comply with all regulations. Inspections begin with the CVE officer collecting the driver's documentation and operating permits. The driver is then interviewed, where the CVE officer identifies the motor carrier, checks for the presence of any hazardous materials or unsecure loads, and further explains the inspection process to the driver. Immediately thereafter, the inspector also checks the condition of the driver for signs of fatigue and for the use or possession of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Following the preliminary interview with the driver, CVE inspectors begin a thorough inspection of the CMV's functional equipment. The inspector checks the front of the CMV including the lights, windshield, windshield wipers, and windshield cleaning system, followed by a front-side

inspection of the steering axle tires, wheels and rims, and the vehicle's exhaust and fuel systems. The inspector then checks the lights on the rear of the truck-tractor, the tires, wheels and rims, the air lines and their connections on the front end of the trailer, and the vehicle's fifth wheel. If there is a trailer attached, the inspector then checks the lights and reflective devices on the trailer, the condition of the trailer frame and side-panels, tires, wheels, rims, coupling device, and safety chains should there be a double trailer attached. Depending on several other factors, the C.V.E. Officer may then elect to expand their inspection to include a complete undercarriage evaluation of the vehicle, where the axle, frame, and brake components are examined

While a complete inspection can easily last an hour or longer CVE officers remain active in their daily vehicle enforcement duties and continue to produce positive results.

So far this year, during the period between January 1st and June 21st, the La Porte Police Department's CVE Unit has conducted approximately 1093 inspections, weighed 201 vehicles, and issued in excess of 611 citations for a wide variety of commercial vehicle related violations. For more information concerning La Porte Police Department's Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement, please call 281-842-3167, or log onto the agency website at www.laportetx.gov/police.