

Inspection Update

A Publication of the Massachusetts Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test Program

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Q & A with Anne Collins

New Registrar's Priorities Are Service and Security

Governor Mitt Romney appointed Anne L. Collins Registrar of Motor Vehicles on November 18, 2005. A graduate of Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. and Northeastern University School of Law, Collins has served in various capacities in state government since 1989. Most recently, she was Director of the Division of Professional Licensure in the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation, supervising 29 professional licensing boards that provide consumer protection in fields ranging from architecture to veterinary medicine. Collins is a former Deputy Director and Chief of Staff of the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation, and a former Deputy Registrar of Motor Vehicles, a post she held from 1999 to 2002. She succeeds the first woman ever to serve as Registrar, Kimberly Hinden. During a recent interview with Inspection Update, Registrar Collins covered a number of subjects, her trademark candor and cheerfulness on display throughout. The Registry of Motor Vehicles has more than 800 employees and operates 36 branch offices around the state, in addition to its offices in Boston.

How does it feel to be back at the RMV?

Tremendous! The people at the Registry are the best: they're hard working, bright and very committed to finding solutions. I'm glad to be back.

How does it feel to be back as the head of the agency?

It's a great honor. Registrar of Motor Vehicles is one of the pinnacle titles in Massachusetts state government -- a big job, but one that I feel comfortable taking on.

I'm grateful to Governor Romney and Secretary Cogliano (of the Executive Office of Transportation) for the faith they've shown in me.

Why do you think you were chosen for the job?

About a year ago, Governor Romney did a nice press conference on the results



Anne Collins

my team at the Division of Professional Licensure (DPL) had achieved in clearing a backlog of consumer complaints. We were able to address all the complaints, sharpen the agency's focus on customer service and customer satisfaction, and significantly improve the process going forward for handling complaints from consumers. The fact that I had extensive Registry experience, and that I had run a customer-facing agency, weighed heavily in the Governor's decision to make me the Registrar.

As Registrar, you're one step below a cabinet secretary, which means you're high up in the Romney-Healey Administration. How have you found that experience?

Very gratifying. The administration is very supportive of its managers at all levels. That was and is my experience.

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Registered Repair Techs Face OBD Training Deadline

With the arrival of the New Year, state-registered automotive technicians are facing an important deadline, and soon.

By January 15, 2006, every registered emissions repairer will either have to have completed advanced on-board diagnostics (OBD II) training or be signed up for such a course in order to retain his or her state-registered status.

Repairers who have not done so will no longer be listed on the *Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test* Web site or on Vehicle Inspection Reports (VIRs).

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'Medium Duties' Won't Get OBD Tests Until '07

Because not all Medium Duty Vehicles (MDVs) are being built with on-board diagnostic (OBD II) systems yet, *Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test* program software was changed in November to push back universal OBD testing of these vehicles until model year 2007. MDVs manufactured for model years 2004 through 2006 will no longer automatically receive OBD tests in Massachusetts.

This should solve a problem some stations and motorists have had with OBD testing of 2004 and newer MDVs that are either owned by people who have relocated here or purchased used vehicles from dealers in other states.

MDV was originally a vehicle class unique to California, covering vehicles with Gross Vehicle Weight Ratings (GVWRs) of 8,501-14,000 pounds. These vehicles are typically

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New Registrar Puts Emphasis on Delivering ‘Value to Our Customers’

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What are your main goals as Registrar?

I believe that if you have just two main goals at any given time, and if you work extremely hard to achieve those two things, you will create a lot of positive by-products from that effort. My main objectives are service and security. We want to serve our customers well and have a positive impact on the lives of the people we touch. And we want to perform well in all of our Homeland Security roles. The authenticity of the documents we issue is pivotal to our interactions with law enforcement. And providing strong support to a large number of law enforcement functions and operations is a must for the RMV.

What will it take to achieve those goals?

It's a question of building on the strengths of the men and women who work here and adding focus to their efforts. We want to

make sure that, from among the literally hundreds of RMV priorities, we are attacking those things that deliver the most value to our customers. With so many issues always before us, our jobs require an enormous amount of focus and discipline.

There is a reorganization of the RMV now taking place within a larger reorganization of the Executive Office of Transportation. What are the reasons for reorganizing?

First, it's important that people understand how strongly I endorse reorganization and the values that I see in it. Coming from the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation, where there was a major reorganization ten years ago, I regard the reorganization as a better way for the Registry to operate and to deliver services.

Let me give you an example: Not counting the MBTA, there are primarily four agencies

within the Executive Office of Transportation: the Executive Office itself, the Highway Department, the Aeronautics Commission and the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Prior to reorganization, each of those agencies had its own human resources director, its own budget director, its own legislative director, etcetera, etcetera. Now, we have combined that expertise and adopted the best practices of each agency across the board.

Isn't reorganization all about saving money?

Of course, but it's about saving money without cutting people's jobs. The Secretary (Secretary of Transportation John Cogliano) was clear from the outset that this was not about laying off state workers, but about leveraging those services that are done best by each component agency of Transportation in order to redistribute people within the agencies to better fulfill the missions of each agency.

Would you cite an example of reorganization-related savings?

When it snowed, the Registry used to hire outside contractors to plow the parking lots at its branch offices. Now the Highway Department is doing that job at no cost to the Registry.

What impact, if any, will the reorganization have on the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test program?

Our Vehicle Safety and Compliance unit remains at the front line of contact between the RMV and the inspection and repair stations. The members of that unit will be seen with the same frequency, and they will be giving the program the same attention they have always devoted to it, if not more so.

What's your most vivid impression of the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test program from your stint as Deputy Registrar of Motor Vehicles?

I learned early on how important the inspection and repair station owners are, and how important their association is. I worked closely with industry leaders to assure them they really had a place at the table, that their needs were important to the Registry, and that their voices were being heard.

It sounds like you enjoyed dealing with station owners.

Absolutely. I felt that we were able to accomplish a lot together. I tried to recognize

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Medium Duty Vehicle OBD Testing

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certified using chassis dynamometer tests, rather than the engine dynamometer tests used for heavy duty vehicle engines.

Although Massachusetts adopted California's Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) standards beginning with model year 1995 vehicles, the Commonwealth did not require the sale of LEV MDVs until model year 2003. By then, California had already been requiring OBD II systems in MDVs for seven years. With no similar requirement for EPA-certified vehicles, however, simply extending OBD testing requirements to all vehicles up to 14,000 pounds was not an option in Massachusetts.

When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it would establish OBD requirements for EPA-certified MDVs starting with model year 2004, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) responded by requiring universal OBD testing of all model year 2004 and later MDVs. But EPA subsequently decided to phase in its MDV OBD II requirements over a three-year period ending in 2007.

This posed a problem for Massachusetts inspectors who were being required to perform OBD emissions tests on MDVs that were not OBD compliant. Delaying OBD testing of MDVs until the EPA phase-in is complete was the only practical solution. ■

Inspection Update is published quarterly and distributed to the automotive service and repair industry in Massachusetts by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Registry of Motor Vehicles, in association with Applus+ Technologies.

Our mission is to help foster the success of the enhanced vehicle inspection and maintenance program by providing news and useful information to vehicle inspectors and repair technicians in a timely fashion.

We also want to facilitate the sharing of helpful information among people within the industry. Toward that end, we encourage our readers to contact us with their suggestions, observations and

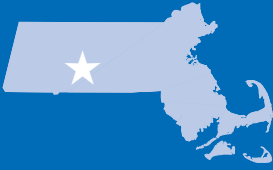
constructive criticism. Ideas that would benefit the industry as a whole will be presented in subsequent editions of *Inspection Update*, as space allows.

To register your comments, please e-mail or phone:

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The Vehicle Maintenance Initiative Committee (VMI), composed entirely of volunteers from the repair industry, serves as *Inspection Update's* editorial advisory board. William Cahill, of B.C. Auto Repair, Randolph, is chair of the VMI Committee.





Mobil-9 Rates a '10' on the Thoroughness Scale

Running one of the busiest inspection stations in western Massachusetts, Mobil-9 Service Center in Amherst, Stu Weiner never takes a shortcut on an inspection, no matter how many cars are waiting in line.

The safety of his customers, not to mention the law behind the *Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test*, mean too much to him to skip or gloss over a required part of the test.

That by-the-book approach means that Mobil-9 produces more than its share of disappointed -- but safer -- motorists. Roughly one of four vehicles undergoing a safety inspection there fails, most often for bad tires, defective ball joints, body rust and worn windshield wiper blades. Eight to nine percent of the vehicles tested for emissions at Mobil-9 fail, which is close to the current state average.

"I believe I have the highest safety failure rate in this part of the state," Weiner said. It's not something he boasts about, nor is it something he apologizes for.

"If they do fail, I talk to them like a friend, not an enforcer," he said. "In most cases, we're able to correct the problem on the spot and send the customer on his way. My customers are no different from anybody else's: they don't like to spend money on repairs, but they do like driving a car they know is safe."

Weiner has found consistent support for his methodology among Registry of Motor Vehicles officials in the region, two of whom he singles out for praise, Phil Hamel and Mike Hullette. "They always give me good information and they always back me up with a motorist when I'm right," he said.

Mobil-9 sits on a major thoroughfare, Route 9, in one of the most beautiful parts of the state, the historic Pioneer Valley. The village of Amherst is a short drive to the east; the campus of the University of Massachusetts is half a mile to the north. Roughly 40 percent of his business comes from the UMass community, Weiner said.

The station's motto, "Making the Valley a safer place, one car at a time," reflects Weiner's scrupulous approach to inspecting vehicles and the time he devotes to each customer. But it also evokes the distances people must travel in western Massachusetts and the need for Valley motorists to keep their vehicles in shape if they are to travel those rural roads in safety.

The key to his success, Weiner believes, can be summed up in one word: honesty. "It's all about honesty, honesty, honesty," he said. "I never sell a customer something he doesn't need."

To handle the 500 to 600 motorists who come to Mobil-9 every month for an *Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test*, Weiner has an "express lane" where vehicles enter the station from the front, are inspected for safety, moved forward for an emissions test, if required, and then driven out the back door.

"It's a system that allows us to work on two inspections at the same time," Weiner said. He points out that the in-ground dynamometer helps to move vehicles quickly through the process. Mobil-9 inspects an average of 3.5 cars per hour.

In addition to Weiner, who describes himself as an "owner-worker," there are 18 full- and part-time employees at Mobil-9, including Weiner's wife, Janice, and the couple's daughter, Jennifer.

Weiner has owned Mobil-9, which sells some 140,000 gallons of gasoline per month, for 19 years. He was a Mobil-9 employee for two years before acquiring the station. Weiner came to the Pioneer Valley as a young man from New York City via Springfield. "After living in New York my whole life, I thought Springfield was the country," he quipped.

The life of a service/inspection station owner "isn't getting any easier," he said, especially during the past year when he's had trouble filling vacancies for inspectors and repair technicians. "With the shortage of qualified help in the area, I've been spending nine hours a day myself doing inspections."



Like many stations in the I&M network, Mobil-9 Service Center is a family-owned and family-run business. Stu Weiner and his wife, Janice, took a break from inspecting vehicles to pose with their daughter, Jennifer.

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A Waiver Request Should Be a Last Reso

Of the millions of motorists who get their vehicles inspected in Massachusetts every year, only several hundred end up seeking waivers from government emissions standards.

But even that number is unnecessarily high, say two veteran managers for the *Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test* program contractor who've been working with the state to clear a backlog of waiver requests. Further, they say, there are some simple steps every inspector and repair technician can take to bring down the number of waivers and avoid frustrating their customers.

Paul Jannoni and **Henry Wysk** of Applus+ Technologies began evaluating pending waiver applications this past summer at the request of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

Initially, they thought they'd be looking at each case and making a straight up or down recommendation. But what was expected to be a waiver advisory role quickly became what they call an "an emissions repair assistance" process.

Said Jannoni: "The objective of the program has always been to get vehicles running as clean as possible and to reduce air pollution overall, not to facilitate exceptions to the rules." See *summary of waiver criteria in accompanying article*.

"It's definitely better to assist a motorist in getting an emissions failure corrected than in getting a waiver," Wysk said. "Most motorists, given a choice, will opt to have their cars pass the emissions test. That's what we tried to make happen as much as possible."

What Jannoni and Wysk saw most frequently in waiver applications were signs of a failure to diagnose the cause or causes of an emissions failure. "When I look at the records from the repair shop and the records don't end with a specific diagnosis of what was wrong, I know right away the car won't qualify for a waiver," Jannoni said.

"We're looking for evidence that the repairer had a strategy for diagnosing and repairing the failure, and that he followed that strategy," Wysk said. "No strategy, no waiver."

Rather than send motorists back to repair shops to demand that repairers devise plans and straighten out those hard-to-fix vehicles, Jannoni and Wysk called or visited scores of shops themselves and discussed the waiver cases in "a non-threatening, consultative way" with shop owners and technicians.

In the large majority of cases, they were able, as Jannoni puts it, "to get the repair shop and the motorist onto the same page in one or two phone calls, and moving toward a mutually acceptable solution."

OBD II readiness for re-testing is, by far, the most common problem they're called on to solve for motorists seeking waivers, with the encouragement of repair shops.

"Some cars are very tricky to make 'ready' after they've been repaired," said Wysk. "There are cars, for example, where the trace to re-set the monitors includes driving at 60 miles an hour for two to three minutes and then going from 60 to 20 without touching the brake. You have to explain to people that they can only do that by moving to the breakdown lane on a highway."

Jannoni and Wysk have so far helped to resolve about 200 pending cases. In only 10 percent of those did they recommend to MassDEP that a waiver be granted. In most cases, the vehicle was successfully repaired through their intervention, but in several instances the motorist decided to junk the vehicle or trade it in when purchasing a new car.

To make sure they were evaluating all waiver applications in a uniform way, Wysk created a checklist of 13 items that he and Jannoni

Criteria for Judging Waiver Requests Clearly Spelled Out

If a registered repair shop has tried to fix a vehicle that failed its initial emissions test and the vehicle still doesn't pass, the owner may apply for a waiver from emissions requirements. If the motorist obtains a waiver, it will be valid until the vehicle's next scheduled emissions test.

To qualify for a waiver, the vehicle must have passed its safety inspection and its emissions control system – including on-board diagnostics (OBD) if the vehicle is model year 1996 or newer – must be intact, with no evidence of tampering. In addition, the amount spent by the vehicle's owner on emissions repairs by a registered repair technician must have exceeded:

- \$400 for a vehicle up to five years old.
- \$300 for a vehicle more than five but less than ten years old.
- \$200 for a vehicle more than ten years old.

The internal computer of a vehicle that received an OBD test must have connected successfully with the inspection station's computer, completed its emissions control system self-checks, and not have been showing codes for engine misfire or catalytic converter efficiency failure.

A vehicle that received a tailpipe test must have passed all portions of the emissions re-test that it passed during its initial inspection, and also have shown some reduction in emissions levels less than three times the cut-points for the pollutants tested.

Regardless of the vehicle's age or the type of emissions test it received, all repairs must be documented with work orders, receipts, vehicle inspection reports (VIRs) issued both before and after repairs, and completed Repair Data Forms signed by a state-registered L-1 technician.

Repairs covered by warranty or recall, performed by a non-registered repair shop, or done by the vehicle owner do not count toward emissions waivers.

Vehicle owners typically initiate the waiver application process by calling the Motorist Support Hotline, 877-387-8234, and scheduling an appointment at a nearby office of the Registry of Motor Vehicles. ■

Right, Not an Early Escape from the Problem

fill out for every vehicle. Among the issues it covers:

- Are there warranties or recalls on the vehicle?
- Were the repairs appropriate for the cited failure?
- Was a copy of the vehicle inspection report (VIR) included in the record?
- Was the repair data form signed by a registered technician?
- Were emissions levels reduced by the repair?
- How much was spent on the repair?
- Were the repairs done by a registered repair shop?

Under I&M regulations, only if emissions work was done at a registered repair shop can a motorist qualify for a waiver. In rare instances, Jannoni or Wysk will recommend that the state make an exception to this rule, and then only after one of them has visited the station where the work was done, checked the equipment used on the vehicle, interviewed the station owner and the technician who performed the work, and verified that the technician is well trained and has been certified by the Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).

“Unless the repairer who did the work at a non-registered repair shop is an expert, we won’t recommend a waiver,” Jannoni said.

“Therefore, the most important thing an inspector can do when a vehicle fails for emissions is urge the motorist to take it to a registered repair shop. The inspector should explain that money spent on repairs at a non-registered repair shop cannot be counted toward a waiver if the vehicle fails the re-test, and that the motorist could end up paying for repairs a second time at a registered shop. The inspector should also direct the motorist to the list of nearby registered repair shops that is printed on the VIR when a vehicle fails,” Jannoni continued.

Wysk advises those who work at registered repair shops to be wary when a motorist starts a conversation saying, “I only want to spend \$300 because I’m entitled to a waiver at that point.”

In that situation, “you have to be very clear with people,” Wysk said. “You should tell

them, ‘For \$300, I may not be able to repair the emissions system. I’ll work up to the \$300 and, at the end, you may have only a diagnosis of what’s wrong and an estimate of what it will cost to fix the problem.’ ”

The more precise and extensive that estimate is, the better it is for the customer who decides to go for a waiver, Wysk pointed out.

Before a customer is told his vehicle cannot be fixed and that he should seek a waiver because he’s spent enough to qualify for one, Jannoni recommends that a repair tech contact one of the five in-state diagnostic

and training centers (DTCs) operated by Applus+ Technologies.

Jannoni and Wysk run the DTCs in Dedham and Woburn, respectively. They and their colleagues are constantly gathering new information on difficult-to-repair vehicles.

“When you’re tempted to give up and say to a motorist, ‘Here’s the receipt, go to the state for a waiver,’ call the DTC instead,” said Jannoni. “There’s a good chance we’ll know a diagnostic procedure you didn’t think of because it’s our job to deal with difficult repairs. We collect and share new information across a very wide network.” ■

Waiver Rules Differ in Two Areas For Vehicles Failing the OBD Test

By Paul Davis

Generally, waivers are available for vehicles that fail initial emissions tests, and then fail emissions re-tests following repairs at registered repair facilities. No waivers are issued for safety failures.

There have been questions recently from the repair community about how the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) and Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) apply waiver criteria to vehicles failing the OBD test after repairs. Many elements are the same, regardless of test type, such as the cost minimums, the exclusion of recall and warranty repairs from cost minimums, the exclusion of repair costs to correct tampering, and the requirement that repairs be appropriate for the emissions failure.

There are two areas where the waiver provisions for tailpipe and OBD tests do not coincide, and understanding them is important.

One cornerstone of the waiver provisions is a prohibition on waivers for gross emitting vehicles. For a vehicle receiving a tailpipe test, a waiver cannot be issued if emissions are more than three times the cut-point. For a vehicle receiving an OBD test, a waiver cannot be issued for a catalyst efficiency failure or catalyst-damaging conditions, such as misfire.

Because of the important role the catalytic converter plays in reducing emissions, a vehicle failing for catalyst efficiency is required to have its cat monitor ready when re-inspected. If the monitor is not ready, the vehicle will be turned away.

A repair technician may need to provide assistance to a customer whose vehicle has catalyst monitors that will not re-set. This condition may also create confusion for an inspector who is unaware that the vehicle failed due to a catalyst efficiency code. Currently, the codes requiring the catalyst monitor to run are P0420-424 and PO430-34.

The second area where waiver provisions differ centers on readiness: no waiver will be issued if a vehicle equipped with OBD is “not ready” for its emissions re-test.

The OBD system is basically an on-board emissions test. As each monitor completes its test, it indicates whether certain aspects of the vehicle’s emissions control system are operating properly, and stores these “self-test” results.

If monitors are cleared, then there is no self-test history to indicate whether the emissions controls are operating properly. With no self-test history, there is no emissions test. This is why vehicles that are not ready fail only their initial test but are turned away when they return for a re-test. ■

Paul Davis is MassDEP program manager for the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test.

New Registrar Praises Inspectors, Repairers

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the multiple stakeholders, to be honest with them all, and to stick to a course once it was decided on. I believe they appreciated that approach and the results that came from it.

What are your thoughts today on the Enhanced Emissions and Safety Test program?

I'm pleased that it's come through so well. It's had its bumps and bruises along the way, but overall it's worked fairly well.

This is a mature program; its next phase is on the horizon. That behooves us to look at what's gone well with it, what needs to go better, how we are going to make it run even smoother for the stations and the public, and how can we make it more effective in terms of the program's policy aims: vehicle safety and a healthier environment. Before we go into the next phase of I&M, we're going to do a thorough re-examination of the program.

If you could personally visit every inspection station and registered repair shop, what would you say to the people working there?

First, I would thank them for helping the I&M program fulfill its mission. Their care, their concern and their ethical administration of this program are why it's working. Second, I'd ask questions and I'd listen. I want to know what they need to make the program run better for them and their customers.

How do you feel about being the second woman in a row to serve as Registrar?

I feel grateful to all the women who went before me in state government and had to make a higher climb than I did. State government really leads society in the way it provides opportunities for women to hold managerial and executive positions. That's a good thing for me individually and for women in general.

Roughly two-thirds of the managers at the RMV are women. They must be encouraged to have a woman in the top spot.

I think that's the case. But at the end of the day, it's about results, not gender. ■

Profile: Mobil-9 Service Center, Amherst

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If the heavy workload and demands of running a booming business are taking their toll on him, it doesn't show. Weiner's energy and determination are evident in the way he speaks, walks and dresses: he wears a freshly laundered shirt and tie every day, and when the weather turns cold, he dons an immaculate blue jacket. "If you want to be treated like a professional, you have to look and act like one," Weiner said.

But when the day is done, Weiner easily sheds his professional responsibilities and demeanor. He pursues a number of hobbies – motorcycle riding, photography, restoring vintage Corvettes, collecting toy soldiers -- and he likes to spend time at Lake Winnepesaukee, where his family has a vacation home.

"After a really stressful day at work, I like to go into the garage next to my house (in Greenfield) and get lost in a restoration project on one of the cars," Weiner said.

The photos of the old Corvettes he's restored to mint condition suggest that Weiner approaches his hobbies as thoroughly as he does the *Enhanced Emissions and Safety Test*. His vintage vehicles are in such good shape that one was on loan for over two years to the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky. "There's a lot of satisfaction in doing things right," he said.

Mobil-9 Service Center
373 Northampton Road (Route 9)
Amherst, MA 01002, 413-256-0686

Monday-Friday, and last Saturday of the month, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. ■

Training Deadline

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Massachusetts mandated that registered repair techs undergo advanced OBD II training in the fall of 2004, adopting a recommendation of the Vehicle Maintenance Initiative Sub-committee of the I&M Advisory Committee.

Subsequently, the state set a November 1, 2005 deadline for technicians to take the training or lose their registered status. That deadline has been revised to accommodate the many technicians who expressed an interest in the training but were having difficulty fitting the course into their schedules.

Registered repairers may choose to take the OBD II training course with MassBay Community College or with the Automotive Career Development Center (ACDC), which will announce its course schedule in January 2006.

For information on upcoming OBD II courses, contact the Station Support Hotline, 877-297-5552, or Jon Hess at Applus+ Technologies, 508-624-9159. ■

Some Web Sites Offering Helpful Info to Repairers

www.iatn.net

www.indentifix.com

www.lindertech.com

www.motorage.com

www.howstuffworks.com

www.hi-tektraining.com

www.asashop.org

www.autoinc.org

www.motor.com

www.nastf.org

Helpful Web Sites on Drive Cycles

Web sites to visit when needing information on readiness for OBD II testing and on drive cycles that re-set monitors:

<http://www.mitchell1.com>

<http://www.alldata.com/techtips>

<http://www.obdii.com>



MassDEP Gets the Darndest Calls

The Key to a Maddening Repair Often Hangs on a Simple Thread

By Paul Davis

A used car dealer phoned the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) with a problem: he was unable to get a Ford Windstar “ready” for its on-board diagnostic (OBD) inspection, and was asking for a waiver or permission to do a tailpipe test in lieu of the OBD test so he would not have to cancel the sale. When I explained that he would not be permitted a waiver or a tailpipe test when the vehicle returned for an emissions test in two years, he understood why these were not viable options.



Paul Davis, MassDEP Program Manager for Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test

While recounting his tribulations, the used car dealer happened to mention that he had driven the vehicle for a while then pulled it up to a workstation for a diagnostic scan, at which point he found that all but two of the monitors were ready. Because the Windstar was older and allowed to have two monitors not ready, he thought the vehicle would pass. But, since we were having this discussion, I waited for the other shoe to drop.

After completing the diagnostic scan, the dealer turned off the vehicle so he could talk with the inspector. When they rescanned the vehicle to document their progress, all of its monitors had returned to “not ready.” The inspector was baffled and the dealer was stumped, to say the least.

I offered that it sounded like there was a problem maintaining electricity to the powertrain control module (PCM): the vehicle was behaving as if the battery were being disconnected every time it was turned off. I could hear the proverbial gears turning on the other end of the phone, and he returned to the Windstar readiness challenge with renewed vigor.

About a week later, I received a call from the dealer with good news: He had found and corrected the problem. He indicated that the PCM gets power from two sources: one was when the ignition is on, the other when it is off. After our discussion, he tested for power at the PCM and found none. After a lot of looking, he found a break in the wire that was supposed to maintain power when the vehicle is off. As soon as that was repaired, the vehicle was soon ready and passed its inspection.

Moral of the story: Difficult problems sometimes have the simplest solutions.

An Illuminating Conversation With Mercedes Owner

While MassDEP fields some strange calls, the award winner for this edition was the motorist claiming that his 1996 Mercedes had falsely failed its OBD emissions test, and he had a letter from Mercedes to prove it.

The inspector had told him something was wrong, he claimed, because the “check engine” light came on when he plugged the

workstation in to the vehicle’s diagnostic link connector (DLC) and went out when he unplugged it.

When I started to ask him about his vehicle, the caller admitted that all he knew about cars was you put gasoline in them to make them go, and you occasionally take them to someone who does something to keep them running. But, he at least sent in a copy of the letter so we could see what Mercedes had told him.

The letter explained that in a 1996 Mercedes vehicle, a simple electrical connection causes the MIL to illuminate when an OBD scanner is plugged into the DLC so the technician will know that the workstation has successfully made contact with the vehicle. In states where vehicle inspectors include visual MIL checks, the manufacturer said, some 1996 Mercedes vehicles might falsely fail as a result.

Since the Massachusetts test is designed to fail a vehicle only if monitors are not ready or the MIL has been commanded on by the PCM, MassDEP looked into the test record for the caller’s vehicle to determine what may have gone wrong. As it turned out, his vehicle failed because three monitors were not ready.

Inspectors and repairers should be aware that an MIL coming on to signal contact between the workstation and the vehicle is not a problem. Only when a vehicle is not ready, or the MIL has been commanded on by the PCM, should the vehicle fail its emissions test. ■

ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

June – August 2005

Violations Issued to Inspectors : 393

Violations Issued to Stations: 367

Inspector Privileges Revoked: 4

Inspectors Required to Retrain: 12

Inspectors Suspended: 126

Stations Suspended: 161

Don't Get Burned by Breaking Rules for Heating with Waste Oil

Many Massachusetts inspection stations and repair shops burn waste oil in space heaters, and occasionally in large boilers or furnaces, to keep their service bays warm during the colder months. With the price of heating fuel skyrocketing, this is an increasingly attractive option. But if you choose to burn waste oil for interior heating, do it safely and within the law:

- First, apply for local fire department approval to install the space heating equipment and to store the waste oil to be used as fuel.
- Second, notify the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) if you plan to use a space heater with a design capacity of 500,000 British Thermal Units (BTU) per hour or less, or apply to MassDEP for a permit to operate a boiler rated at 3 million BTU per hour or more.

Burning waste oil in space heaters rated at more than 500,000 BTU or in boilers or furnaces rated at less than 3 million BTU is prohibited in Massachusetts. Regardless of what companies marketing them may claim, only virgin fuel oil may legally be burned in these units.

For additional information, call the MassDEP Waste Oil Hotline at 617-556-1022. ■

PLEASE REMEMBER!

Give a Vehicle Emissions Repair Packet to every motorist whose vehicle fails the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test



Where to Turn When You Have a Question

Station Hotline

877-297-5552

For workstation and other equipment problems

Motorist Hotline

877-387-8234

For consumer issues

Department of Environmental Protection

617-292-5745

For emissions issues

Registry of Motor Vehicles

617-351-9333

For various Registry issues

Web Site

www.mass.gov/vehicletest

General program information

printed on recycled paper 

Few Motorists Seek Emissions Waivers, and Even That's Too Many! *See why on pages 4-5*

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