# Annual Vehicle Safety Inspections
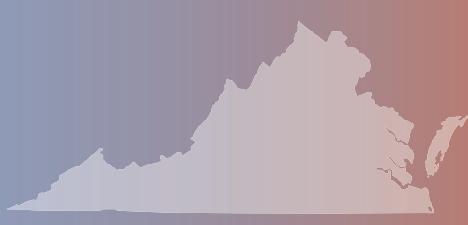
Virginia currently requires all vehicles registered in the Commonwealth to undergo a safety inspection annually. During each inspection, certified technicians confirm operating standards for 21 vehicle systems or elements, including brakes, tires, and safety equipment such as turn signals. The regulation applies to all vehicles, from personal cars to commercial buses and tractor-trailers. **Virginia's safety inspection program helps save lives.**

8,209,716
vehicles inspected

1,634,740
vehicles failed due to critical safety defect(s)

Source: Virginia State Police (2018)

20%
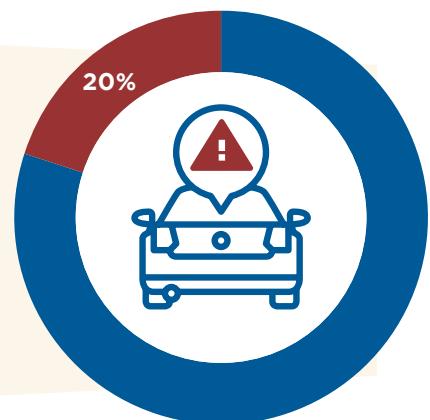
Research shows that crashes involving vehicles with defects are twice as likely to result in a fatality as crashes involving vehicles without defects.*

Source: University of Texas at Austin Center for Transportation Research, Economic and Safety Considerations: Motor Vehicle Safety Inspections for Passenger Vehicles in Texas *(2018)*

Vehicle age & safety

Today, the average age of a state-registered vehicle is

11.8 years

Source: Virginia State Police (2018)

Failure rate by vehicle age

As vehicles age, their failure rates increase. Statistics from Virginia State Police show vehicles manufactured in 2009—11 years ago—or earlier fail safety inspections 29% of the time. When you consider the average car on the road is 11.8 years old, the importance of a safety inspection program becomes clearer.

"But my new car warns me when any safety items on my vehicle need attention...."

Inspection item	Vehicle warning?
Tire tread depth	✖
Tire pressure	✔
Brake pads	?*
Windshield glass	✖
Wiper blades	✖

*Very few new vehicles can detect wear on brake pads

While the newest vehicles manufactured today can come with alert systems to advise of issues, those don't necessarily align with factors assessed in a safety inspection. Those electronic monitoring systems also are not found on every vehicle, particularly among lower-cost and older models.

Research shows safety inspections save lives.

» According to a 2018 U.S. Department of Transportation study, **Virginia** and **Pennsylvania**, **both of which have robust annual safety inspection programs, were well below the national average of traffic deaths per 100,000 in population, at 9.6 and 9.3 fatalities, respectively.** The national average of fatalities per 100,000 population is 11.17, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

» To compare, **South Carolina** and **Mississippi eliminated their safety inspection programs** in 1995 and 2015 respectively. The result? The two had the **highest traffic deaths per 100,000 in population in America** at 20.4 and 22.2 fatalities.

> » **South Carolina:** In the 11 years after eliminating its safety inspection program, the state experienced a **29.04% increase in traffic fatalities.**

> » **Mississippi: The state experienced a spike in traffic fatalities** per 100,000 in population as well as an increase in deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. **The state has yet to see a reduction in pre-elimination fatality**

numbers. In 2014, the year before the state eliminated its safety inspection program, there were 607 traffic fatalities: 20.27 deaths per 100,000 in population, and 1.54 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. **The year after eliminating the program, the numbers increased to 677 traffic fatalities, or 22.62 deaths per 100,000 population,** and 1.70 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.

» **Florida:** Since eliminating its program in 2000, **Florida has experienced a 63.4% increase in its total number of traffic crashes.** The state had 2,920 fatalities. By 2005—after the elimination of its program in 2000, that number increased 21% to 3,533.

» **Texas:** A 2018 global study from the University of Texas' Center for Transportation Research indicated that inspection programs save lives and enhance safety. The study found **crashes involving vehicles with defects are twice as likely to result in a fatality as crashes with vehicles without defects**. Crashes related to vehicles with defects total more than $2 billion annually.

Vehicle component key to safety

> » According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, **35% of all motor vehicle crashes that can be attributed to a vehicle component's failure are related to tires or wheels. Another 22% are related to brakes.**

> » According to Virginia State Police, in 2018, among the **top five reasons** that Virginia vehicles failed inspections were: **steering and suspension issues, brakes, and tires.**

Virginia's inspection program

> » **An annual safety inspection costs $20.**

> » The program is managed by the Virginia State Police.

> » Virginia has 5,433 inspection stations that employ 15,566 certified inspectors.

> » Applications are pending for 26 new inspection stations and 1,382 inspectors.

INSPECTION STATION

Inspection required within **12** months of last inspection month

THE LARGE NUMBERS ON THE STICKER INDICATES THE DATE OF EXPIRATION

Virginia registered motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers must be inspected annually

INSPECT EARLY – AVOID DELAYS