

History of Inspections in N.C.

The first motor vehicle safety inspection program in the United States was introduced in Massachusetts in 1926. Today, 18 states and the District of Columbia maintain safety inspection programs. As one of them, North Carolina safety inspections began in 1966.

North Carolina established emissions inspections to test vehicles to determine whether their pollution controls are working properly. Using on-board diagnostics systems installed on new cars and trucks since 1996, technicians can check to see how vehicle equipment controls nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, the main cause of ozone, acid rain and haze in North Carolina.

The 2002 legislation which established emissions inspections in North Carolina was the Clean Smokestacks Act, which requires coal-burning power plants to reduce emissions of harmful air pollutants over ten years. The same legislation also requires a reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions, found in vehicles without properly working emissions controls.

Starting in July 2002, the state initiated on-board diagnostic (OBD) emissions inspections in nine counties. By 2006, another 39 counties were added to bring 48 counties under emissions requirements established to keep the state's air quality in compliance with guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Since November 1, 2008, North Carolina's vehicle safety and emissions inspections have been electronically added to the vehicle's registration record. This means that windshield inspection stickers are no longer issued by your inspection station. The vehicle's safety and emissions inspections are due the same month as the vehicle's registration renewal. Inspections must be obtained no more than 90 days before registration renewal is due. Remember to get your vehicle inspected before attempting to renew your registration.