

**OFFICE OF VEHICLE SAFETY COMPLIANCE  
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION**

**OVSC MISSION**

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“The Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance (OVSC) tests new vehicles and regulated equipment items to applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSSs), enforces importation and certification regulations, maintains identifying and VIN-deciphering information submitted by motor vehicle and equipment manufacturers, and monitors light and heavy vehicle fuel economy requirements for credits and monetary penalties. OVSC carries out its mission by conducting random compliance testing, and compliance inspections, and by reviewing import data from the Customs and Border Protection Agency, and fuel economy data from the Environmental Protection Agency”.

Manufacturers of regulated motor vehicles and/or items of motor vehicle equipment certify that each is in full compliance with all Federal laws, standards and regulations pertinent to vehicle safety, fuel economy, damageability, and consumer information.

**LABORATORY TEST PROCEDURE**

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For any FMVSS compliance program, a detailed OVSC Laboratory Test Procedure is developed. The FMVSS specifies the performance requirements and the tests required to demonstrate product compliance. The OVSC Laboratory Test Procedure specifies step-by-step instructions and check sheets, and reporting requirements. The purpose of the test procedure is two-fold.

1. Since all compliance testing is conducted by contractors, it provides a detailed description of the various requirements and provides a uniform testing and data recording format to independent testing laboratories (contractors) conducting compliance tests for the OVSC. The OVSC provides contractor laboratories with Laboratory Test Procedures as guidelines for obtaining compliance test data. The data are used to indicate if a specific vehicle or item of motor vehicle equipment meets the performance requirements of the subject FMVSS.
2. It provides a detailed description to the vehicle and equipment manufacturers of how OVSC intends to verify that the affected products meet the minimum performance requirements of applicable FMVSSs. Manufacturers can use the OVSC Laboratory Test Procedure as a guide in conducting its own certification and product surveillance tests, preferably testing more stringently to ensure an adequate margin of safety.

The OVSC Laboratory Test Procedures are not intended to limit or restrain a contractor from developing or utilizing any testing techniques or equipment which will assist in procuring the required compliance test data. These Laboratory Test Procedures do not constitute an endorsement or recommendation for use of any product or method. However, the application of any such testing technique or equipment by the contractor is subject to prior approval of the COTR.

The OVSC Laboratory Test Procedures are not rules, regulations or NHTSA interpretations regarding the meaning of a FMVSS. The Laboratory Test Procedures are not intended to limit the requirements of the applicable FMVSS(s). In some cases, the OVSC Laboratory Test Procedures may not include all of the various FMVSS minimum performance requirements. The Laboratory Test Procedures may specify test conditions that are less severe than the minimum requirements of the standard. In addition, the Laboratory Test Procedures may be modified by the OVSC at any time without notice, and the COTR may direct or authorize contractors to deviate from these procedures, as long as the tests are performed in a manner consistent with the standard itself and within the scope of the contract. Laboratory Test Procedures may not be relied upon to create any right or benefit in any person. Therefore, compliance of a vehicle or item of motor vehicle equipment is not necessarily guaranteed, if the manufacturer limits its certification tests to those described in the OVSC Laboratory Test Procedures.

## **TEST SPECIMEN PROCUREMENT**

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Potential vehicle and equipment test specimens are selected annually for compliance testing. Vehicles are purchased from new vehicle dealerships by obtaining competitive bids on vehicles. Equipment items are selected at random from manufacturing plants, distribution centers or retail stores. This approach is used by OVSC to ensure that the test specimens selected are a true representation of the product which could be purchased by the consumer. In addition, vehicle inspections are conducted at new car dealerships and testing laboratories to visually verify compliance to some of the FMVSSs.

## **PRELIMINARY EVALUATIONS (PEs) & COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATIONS (CIs)**

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The apparent failure of a compliance test specimen triggers a comprehensive technical investigation. The manufacturer is given the opportunity to review the test procedure, test instrument calibration, detailed test results, examine the failed vehicle or equipment item, and question the laboratory personnel. If necessary, a Preliminary Evaluation (PE) is initiated. The data are analyzed by an OVSC safety compliance engineer. After completion of the analysis, a decision is made as to whether there is a strong indication of noncompliance with FMVSS requirements, and whether to upgrade the investigation to a Compliance Investigation (CI). Based on all of the information available, the OVSC Director makes a decision to either close the PE file or CI file or to continue with the investigation. A CI letter may be sent to the manufacturer stating that the agency is proceeding with the investigation and that the initiation of a recall campaign by the manufacturer is indicated. If there is no recall campaign announced by the manufacturer, an initial decision of noncompliance may be made by the Associate Administrator for Enforcement and the case forwarded to the Chief Counsel's office for appropriate legal action.

Each investigation is different and requires actions dictated by the evidence. For instance, there may be additional visits to the test laboratory or the manufacturer's test and manufacturing facilities, additional technical meetings and correspondence exchanges.

If a case is forwarded to the Chief Counsel's office, the processing procedure is more formal. In accordance with Public Law 89-563, the complete process requires that after the initial decision

of noncompliance is made by the Associate Administrator for Enforcement, a public hearing is held to afford the manufacturer or any other interested party an opportunity to present their views and then a final decision of noncompliance may be made by the agency Administrator.

## IMPORT AND MANUFACTURER REGISTRATION ACTIVITIES

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OVSC also monitors the importation of motor vehicles and equipment for compliance with applicable FMVSS. The Office registers importers of vehicles that are not originally manufactured to conform to those standards and processes paperwork submitted by registered importers to demonstrate that the vehicles they import have been modified to conform before they are licensed or registered for on-road use. The Office works with US Customs and Border Protection to ensure that all other nonconforming vehicles and equipment do not gain permanent entry to the United States. The Office also processes information submitted by manufacturers to identify themselves and the products they manufacture to the FMVSS as well as information needed to decipher the vehicle identification numbers or VINs that must be assigned to all motor vehicles manufactured for sale in the United States.

## SUMMARY

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A FMVSS self-certification program exists in the United States. The NHTSA does **not** certify that vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment meet the requirements of various FMVSSs or issue "approval" stickers, labels, certificates, etc. A NHTSA compliance testing program has been in place since 1968. Each year the OVSC randomly selects vehicles and items of motor vehicle equipment for compliance testing by independent testing laboratories under contract with the OVSC to verify that the manufacturer's certification is valid. The OVSC compliance testing program is a strong incentive for manufacturers of vehicles and/or items of motor vehicle equipment to institute and maintain a strong quality control/product surveillance program.

## REFERENCE INFORMATION FMVSSs

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| <b>101-</b> Controls and Displays ( <b>Inspection</b> )                    | <b>202-</b> Head Restraints  |
| <b>102-</b> Transmission Shift Lever Sequences, etc. ( <b>Inspection</b> ) | <b>203-</b> Impact Protection for the Driver from Steering Control |
| <b>103-</b> Windshield Defrosting and Defogging                            | <b>204-</b> Steering Control Rearward Displacement                 |
| <b>104-</b> Windshield Wiping and Washing                                  | <b>205-</b> Glazing Materials ( <b>Inspection</b> )                |
| <b>105-</b> Hydraulic Brake System   | <b>206-</b> Door Locks and Door Retention Components               |
| <b>106-</b> Brake Hoses  | <b>207-</b> Seating Systems  |
| <b>108-</b> Lamps, Reflective Devices etc.                                 | <b>208-</b> Occupant Crash Protection                              |
| <b>109-</b> Pass. Car New Pneumatic Tires                                  | <b>209-</b> Seat Belt Assemblies                                   |
| <b>110-</b> Pass. Car Tire Selection & Rims                                | <b>210-</b> Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages                          |
| <b>111-</b> Rearview Mirrors   | <b>212-</b> Windshield Mounting                                    |
| <b>113-</b> Hood Latch Systems ( <b>Inspection</b> )                       | <b>213-</b> Child Restraint Systems                                |
| <b>114-</b> Theft Protection   | <b>214D</b> Side Impact Protection (Dynamic)                       |
| <b>116-</b> Hydraulic Brake Fluids   |  |
| <b>117-</b> Retreaded Pneumatic Tires                                      |  |

- (Inspection)**
- 118-** Power-Operated Window Systems
  - 119-** Truck/Bus New Pneumatic Tires
  - 120-** Truck/Bus Tire Selection & Rims
  - 121D** Air Brake Systems (Dynamometer)
  - 121V** Air Brake Systems (Vehicles)
  - 122-** Motorcycle Brake Systems
  - 123-** Motorcycle Controls and Displays
- (Inspection)**
- 124-** Accelerator Control Systems
  - 125-** Warning Devices
  - 129-** Passenger Car New Non-Pneumatic Tires
  - 131-** School Bus Pedestrian Safety Devices
  - 135-** Passenger Car Brake Systems
  - 201-** Occupant Protection in Interior Impact
  - 201U** Occupant Protection in Interior Impact - Upper Interior Head Impact Protection
  - 201P** Rigid Pole Side Impact Test

- 214S** Side Impact Protection (Static)
- 216-** Roof Crush Resistance
- 217-** Bus Window Retention and Release
- 218-** Motorcycle Helmets
- 219-** Windshield Zone Intrusion
- 220-** School Bus Rollover Protection
- 221-** School Bus Body Joint Strength
- 222-** School Bus Passenger Seating
- 223-** Rear Impact Guards
- 224-** Rear Impact Protection **(Inspection)**
- 226-** Ejection Mitigation
- 301F** Fuel System Integrity - Frontal
- 301L** Fuel System Integrity - Lateral
- 301R** Fuel System Integrity - Rear
- 301S** Fuel System Integrity - Sch Bus
- 302-** Flammability of Interior Materials
- 303-** Fuel System Integrity of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Vehicles
- 304-** CNG Fuel Container Integrity

## REGULATION PARTS

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- 512-** Confidential Business Information
  - 523-** Vehicle Classification
  - 525-** Exemptions from Average Fuel Economy Standards
  - 529-** Manufacturers of Multistage Automobiles
  - 531-** Passenger Car Average Fuel Economy Standards
  - 533-** Light Truck Fuel Economy Standards
  - 535** 3-year Carry forward and Carryback of Fuel Economy Credits
  - 537-** Automotive Fuel Economy Reports
  - 541-** Federal Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard
  - 542-** Procedures for Selection of Covered Vehicles
  - 543-** Petitions for Exemption from Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard
  - 544-** Insurer Reporting Requirements
  - 572C** 3-year Old Child
  - 572D** 6-month Old Infant
  - 572E** Hybrid III Test Dummy
  - 572F** Side Impact Dummy (SID) 50th Percentile Male
  - 572I** 6-year Old Child
  - 572J** 9-month Old Child
  - 572K** Newborn Infant
  - 573-** Defect and Noncompliance Reports
  - 574-** Tire Identification and Record Keeping
  - 575-** Consumer Information Regulation
  - 575.103** Truck-Camper Loading
  - 575.104** Uniform Tire Quality Grading Standards
  - 577-** Defect and Noncompliance Notification
  - 579-** Defect and Noncompliance Responsibility

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| <p><b>552-</b> Petitions for Rulemaking, Defect and Noncompliance Orders</p> <p><b>554-</b> Standards Enforcement and Defect Investigation</p> <p><b>555-</b> Temporary Exemption from Motor Vehicle Safety Standards</p> <p><b>556-</b> Exemption for Inconsequential Defect or Noncompliance</p> <p><b>557-</b> Petitions for Hearings on Notification &amp; Remedy of Defects</p> <p><b>563-</b> Event Data Recorders</p> <p><b>565-</b> Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) Content Requirements</p> <p><b>566-</b> Manufacturer Identification</p> <p><b>567-</b> Certification Regulation</p> <p><b>568-</b> Vehicles Manufactured in Two or More Stages</p> <p><b>569-</b> Re-grooved Tires</p> <p><b>570-</b> Vehicle in Use Inspection Standards</p> <p><b>572-</b> Anthropomorphic Test Dummy</p> <p><b>572B</b> 50th Percentile Male (Hybrid II)</p> | <p><b>580-</b> Odometer Disclosure Requirements</p> <p><b>581-</b> Bumper Standard</p> <p><b>583-</b> Automotive Parts Content Labeling</p> <p><b>585-</b> Automatic Restraint Phase-In Reporting Requirements</p> <p><b>586-</b> Side Impact Phase-In Reporting Requirements</p> <p><b>587-</b> Side Impact Moving Deformable Barrier</p> <p><b>588-</b> Child Restraint Systems Recordkeeping Requirements</p> <p><b>589-</b> Upper Interior Component Head Impact Protection Phase-in Reporting Requirements</p> <p><b>590-</b> Motor Vehicle Emission Inspections</p> <p><b>591-</b> Importation of Vehicles/Equipment Subject to Federal Safety Standards</p> <p><b>592-</b> Registered Importers (RIs)</p> <p><b>593-</b> Determination for Eligibility for Importation of Vehicles</p> <p><b>594-</b> Registered Importer (RI) Fee Schedule</p> |
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