

# Inspection Update

A Publication of the Massachusetts Enhanced Emissions and Safety Test Program

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## All Equipment to be Audited by December 20

### State Launches All-Out Effort to Improve Reliability of Emissions Tests

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), its emissions testing contractor and others have uncovered a number of significant problems with the maintenance and reliability of equipment used to test auto emissions in Massachusetts.

DEP audits conducted in 2002 revealed that on days testing equipment was checked, one or more components critical for measuring emissions did not meet specifications in 39 percent of the machines tested.

"We believe the Massachusetts emissions testing program is fundamentally sound, but equipment reliability is unquestionably a challenge," said DEP Commissioner Robert W. Gollidge Jr. "We're committed to working with our partners to fix what's broken and restore confidence in the accuracy of emissions tests."

DEP and Agbar Technologies, with support from the Association of Automotive Service Providers (AASP) and the New England Service Station and Automotive Repair Association (NESSARA), have launched an intensive effort to quickly identify and correct problems, and improve testing equipment performance statewide.

Agbar will be conducting audits of emissions testing equipment at all 1,505 Massachusetts inspections stations by December 20, 2003. The audits will focus on four key components to ensure that they are providing accurate measurements:

- Gas bench;
- Leak check;
- VMAS; and
- Gas cap tester.

Auditors will review key equipment performance parameters to determine whether inspection stations have been routinely performing all user maintenance checks. (See related article, *Seven Steps to Good Equipment Maintenance*, on the reverse.)

Auditors are scheduling their visits Monday through Saturday, and except at fleet stations, are avoiding peak inspection days at the end of the month that usually extend into the beginning of the next month. The audit teams are committed to minimizing potential business disruptions for stations and their customers as much as possible.

As technicians from Agbar and its subcontractors complete their audits, DEP will conduct random re-checks of their work to ensure that the companies are meeting their obligations, testing equipment is being operated and maintained properly, and inspectors and machines are complying with required testing protocols.

Ensuring that testing equipment is operating properly is the first in a series of steps for repairing and improving the emissions testing program. Other steps include:

- Possible changes to the existing test's drive trace and computer hardware.
- Increased quality assurance and quality control, including the fuel economy check and watching for trends in testing data.
- More aggressive equipment audits by Agbar over the rest of its contract with the Commonwealth.
- Increased enforcement by the Registry of Motor Vehicles of state requirements that all vehicle owners obtain annual inspection stickers.

"When this effort succeeds, it will be because everyone has worked well together and made a genuine commitment," Gollidge said. "I appreciate how everyone has rolled up their sleeves and jumped in to help so far."

If you have questions about the equipment audits now underway, contact:

Agbar Technologies by calling the toll-free Station Support Hotline at (877) 297-5552, or

Paul Davis of DEP at (617) 556-1020, or Paul.Davis@state.ma.us. ■

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DEP Commissioner Robert W. Gollidge Jr.

In addition, each audit will include an equipment tampering check. Among the items to be inspected for signs of tampering are air supply filters (including water and oil separation devices), pressure settings and workstation-related piping changes. If evidence of tampering is found, machines will be locked out of the system.

The audits will take less than two hours over two visits to complete. The first audit, conducted by Agbar's equipment subcontractors, ESP and SPX, will take approximately one hour. This audit will look at the gas bench, leak checks, and the oxygen sensor in the VMAS. Any malfunctioning equipment will need to be repaired or replaced before the follow-up audit can be scheduled. The follow-up audit, which will take about 45 minutes and will be conducted by Agbar field staff, will cover user maintenance items, the gas cap tester, and VMAS flow.

"Things are progressing well," said Jim Valerio, Agbar's Quality Assurance/Quality Control Manager. "We're committing additional resources to complete the audits on time and meet the program's planned objectives."

More than 20 technicians from Agbar, ESP and SPX are in the field, conducting an average of 50 audits per day across the state. They are working closely with inspection station personnel to repair and upgrade components whenever audits reveal they are not providing accurate measurements.

Roger Montbleau, owner of Lowell Automatic Transmission and a past president of NESSARA, said members of the group are working with the auditors and "we're confident they will produce the desired results."

## When Motorists Ask Tough Questions... Having the Right Answers is Key

Restoring public confidence in the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test is important to everyone with a stake in the program. Inspectors may play the most critical role because they test vehicles and deal with motorists every day. Here are some tips for talking about emissions tests with your customers.

### What should I tell a motorist whose vehicle fails its emissions test?

Vehicles that fail their emissions tests need to be repaired before they are re-tested.

### Is there anything else I should do?

Yes. Be sure to hand the motorist a copy of the dark blue Vehicle Emissions Repair Packet, which contains three handouts with helpful information and answers to many common questions. If your station's inventory of packets is running low, call the toll-free Station Support Hotline at (877) 297-5552 to order more.

### What if a motorist questions the accuracy of my testing equipment?

Any motorist who believes your testing equipment may be faulty and wants verification of the results before having the vehicle repaired can request a Challenge Inspection. To arrange a Challenge Inspection, the motorist needs to call either the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test Hotline at (877) 387-8234 or the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) at (617) 351-9333. A Challenge Inspection request must be made within two business days of the original inspection.

### How does a Challenge Inspection work?

The vehicle is re-tested at a facility chosen by RMV. If the Challenge Inspection also results in a failure, the motorist is required to pay a second \$29 inspection fee and have the vehicle repaired. If the vehicle passes its Challenge Inspection, there is no charge and the vehicle is issued an inspection sticker.

### What about the accuracy of Challenge Inspections?

RMV is scheduling Challenge Inspections only at stations that have already been audited, to ensure that their testing equipment is functioning properly and providing accurate measurements.

### How should I respond to other motorist concerns?

If your customers repeatedly make the same complaints, please let us know by calling the Station Support Hotline at (877) 297-5552 or using the feedback form on the program Web site at <http://www.mass.gov/vehicletest/contact.html>. The more we know about the public's concerns, the better we can assist you in responding to them.

### What else can I do to help?

Stay up to speed on equipment maintenance procedures and play an active role in making sure that the testing equipment in your inspection station is working correctly. If something doesn't look right to you, bring the problem to your supervisor's attention and follow through to make sure it gets fixed. ■

# Seven Steps to Good Equipment Maintenance

## 1. Check sample probe tips.

Replace probe tips that are faulty. Remember that your analyzer must be able to pass its Leak Check calibration properly. Any deviation will be considered a violation of proper procedures and result in a workstation lockout.

## 2. Keep probes and hoses in good shape.

Don't alter probes or hose lengths. The standard sample hose needs to be between 15 feet and 35 feet long to ensure test reliability. Your station also needs to be equipped with a dual sample hose connection, auxiliary hose assembly and probe for inspecting dual-exhaust vehicles.

## 3. Inspect, clean and replace filters.

Check them all: the cabinet filter, sample system cone filters and the water/oil separator filters for the zero-air generator. If they're dirty, clean or replace them.

## 4. Check for faulty VMAS hoses.

Worn or leaky VMAS hoses don't produce accurate test results, so it's critical to keep them in good condition. On the inlet side, hoses should be between 5 feet and 30 feet in length. From the vehicle exhaust to the outlet vent, they should be no more than 45 feet long.

## 5. Inspect calibration gas bottles.

Remember to scan bottle values into the workstation immediately after replacement. It's also good to get into the habit of verifying bottle values with every calibration. If the values don't match those you have stored in your analyzer's software, be sure to scan the correct values into the machine.

## 6. Replace fading printer ribbons.

Agbar includes a new inspection sticker ribbon with every shipment of 600 stickers that it sends to a station. Ribbons should be changed every time a new supply of 600 stickers is opened.

## 7. Replace deteriorating toner cartridges.

If Vehicle Inspection Reports (VIRs) start coming out of the printer dark and/or streaky, the printer drum may need to be replaced. Call the toll-free Station Support Hotline at (877) 297-5552 to schedule printer service. ■

# New Short-Term Workgroup Zeros in on Program Improvements

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has convened a Short-Term Workgroup to take a hard look at the Enhanced Emissions & Safety Test program with an eye toward making it work better.

Specifically, the workgroup will recommend minimum reliability standards that each equipment vendor must meet, make recommendations for improving the existing emissions test and its software, and begin looking at alternatives for strengthening the program over the long haul.

Chaired by Nancy Seidman, director of the Consumer and Transportation Division in DEP's Bureau of Waste Prevention, the workgroup also includes:

- Roger Montbleau, past president, and Rusty Savignac, vice president, New England Service Station and Automotive Repair Association (NESSARA).
- Stan Morin, president; Bill Cahill, past president; and Jeffrey Choy, educational director, Alliance of Automotive

Service Providers (AASP) of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

- Darrin Greene, program manager, Agbar Technologies
- Bob Judge, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Mark LaFrance, program manager for Vehicle Safety and Compliance Services, Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV)

First, the workgroup will tackle software and other program changes that can be made in the next few months to improve the reliability of the existing emissions test. DEP and RMV have already given the green light for two such changes:

- **Reducing the Fuel Economy Check multiplier from 1.5 to 1.0.** A modification to be included in the OBD II software release will help ensure that inspectors are positioning exhaust collection cones and collecting

samples the right way. The new software will be delivered around the first of the year.

- **Incorporating VMAS hose-off flow checks into 72-hour calibrations.** This change, also part of a software revision, will help inspectors identify equipment with flow performance problems. Agbar will complete the necessary changes, distribute the software and conduct training visits to stations over the next four months.

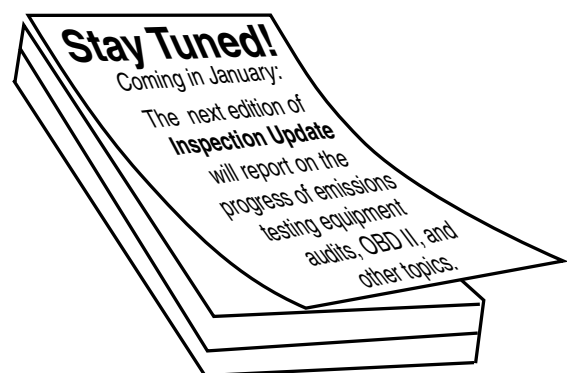
The workgroup will also take a preliminary look at hardware and drive trace changes that could be made to the existing emissions test, and other possible long-term improvements. Members of the workgroup are planning weekly meetings or conference calls through mid-December, when they intend to conclude their work, and have their sights set on issuing recommendations to DEP Commissioner Robert W. Golledge Jr. before the end of the year.

If you have suggestions for the workgroup, please contact:

Stan Morin of AASP of Massachusetts and Rhode Island at (508) 336-2107 or Karstan3@comcast.net;

Roger Montbleau of NESSARA at (978) 667-7706 or NESSARA1@NESSARA.com; or

Nancy Seidman of DEP at (617) 556-1020 or Nancy.Seidman@state.ma.us. ■



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