



## **SVAO report on new light vehicle mechanical fitness Standards**

About a year ago the MTO published a draft version of proposed new standards for Safety Standards Certificate inspections for light duty vehicles looking for public comment. The SVAO wrote a report based on our concerns and sent it in to the MTO. Since then the MTO has come out with the new standards

Starting in July this year, MTO is changing the rules for safety inspections by introducing updated inspection standards. The current standards for a Safety Standards Certificate (SSC) were created in 1974 and there have been very few updates since then, so it does make sense that they would want to modernize them given the massive changes in automotive technology since then.

However, when the new standards were released recently there was a lot of wrong information in the news media (as usual), resulting in confusion and downright loathing from enthusiasts. There's been a lot of hand wringing over the issue of oil leaks (only some leaks will fail the inspection, not all) and warning lights on the dash (some will cause a "fail" but not as many as has been reported). The online forums have been flooded with scathing reviews of the new standards, and not without reason.

While the new standards capture a lot of new stuff that really should be inspected, like air bags and stability control systems, the downside is that they also require a lot more work on the part of mechanics than in the past. They must now measure and record a lot of information on a new inspection report, things like brake rotor and drum sizes, brake pad and lining thicknesses, tire tread depths, tire pressures, fuel level gauges, etc., and all this takes time and time is money.

The new standards no longer use the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) as a reference for things like lights – now they rely heavily on OEM standards, Federal standards, "Industry standards" and so on. This means that things like lights that didn't have to work before (because the HTA didn't require them,

e.g. backup lights, side-marker lights on cars, daytime running lights) now have to work because they were required under Federal laws when the vehicle was manufactured. There's also confusion about this OEM stuff because it's vague. For example, does the requirement for a muffler to "...*meet the OEM standard*" include noise level? Not sure, but there are lots of owners who would like to know.

What does all of this mean to the owner of a "historic" vehicle? Not much for a Model T owner except for some extra labour to measure and record things. However, for newer model "historic" vehicles things might be different. The definition of "historic vehicle" has not changed for the purpose of this inspection, it's still "...*at least 30 years old, and substantially unchanged or unmodified from the original manufacturer's product*", and this covers vehicles that have some equipment that wasn't included before. So, if you're the lucky owner of one of the GM cars from the 1970s with passenger side air bags, they have to work – good luck for parts if they don't!

Some things that have always affected rods and other specialty vehicles remain such as missing fenders and bumpers, but there are some new changes too. Here are a few: - no wheel spacers - aftermarket window tint limited to 30% on windshield - no spools - no non-automotive gas tanks (e.g. beer kegs!) - no mixture of radial and non-radial tires - no missing driver-side sun visor - OEM steering wheel diameter - side marker lights required on "... *home-made vehicles registered for the first time after Jan. 01. 2017.*" Other changes that might have an effect on collector vehicles are things such as "*no recapped tires*". And don't ask what constitutes "... *substantially unchanged or unmodified...*" in the definition. The misuse of historic plates is a whole other kettle of fish, but that issue's day is coming!

There is some concern by the SVAO that the MTO may be considering a separate category for "modified vehicles" when it comes to safety certificates and we will be monitoring that issue.

The bottom line here is just these new inspections are going to cost a lot more just because of all the new items that technicians must inspect and record. That's just the labour for the inspection itself, never mind any repairs to the expensive new stuff. A current inspection for a Safety Standards Certificate (a thorough one, not just "kick the tires and try the horn") takes about an hour, but these new ones are going to at least double that by most estimates. Add in the cost of repairs that wouldn't be required under the old standard and you are probably going to be paying more for a used vehicle than before.

It can appear that MTO is trying to build new cars out of used ones, and there will be a huge incentive for big profits from the implementation of this new standard. Any disreputable car dealers, parts suppliers, repair shops, and inspection stations out there are going to love this thing.

Here's a link to the new standards and [it is worth your time to make yourself familiar with them.](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/trucks/pdfs/passenger-light-duty-vehicle-inspection-standard.pdf)

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As always, the Specialty Vehicle Association of Ontario can be contacted either at BOX 142, 3007 Kingston Rd., Scarborough, Ontario M1M 1P1 or through our website [www.svao.org](http://www.svao.org) while I can be contacted at (905) 649-2664.

Submitted on behalf of the SVAO by Chris Whillans (chairman)