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## The Walkaround Check: A Legal Duty and Safety Priority

In commercial transport, where time pressures are high and responsibilities wide-ranging, routine tasks can sometimes be rushed or overlooked.

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However, the walkaround check for commercial vehicles is not just another task; it is a legal requirement and a vital safeguard for public safety.

Whether operating a Heavy Goods Vehicle or a Public Service Vehicle, this check is essential to ensure vehicles are safe, roadworthy, and fit for purpose before they enter public roads.

Additional checks may be required during the day depending on the vehicle's use. For example, further inspections may be necessary if the vehicle has been used off-road, is older, or has a history of defects.

## Why the Walkaround Check Matters

A properly conducted walkaround check helps to:

- prevents avoidable accidents and injuries;
- avoids roadside prohibitions issued by the Driver and Vehicle Standard Agency (DVSA) or the police;
- minimises downtime and protects the public;
- demonstrates compliance with the operator undertakings given to a Traffic Commissioner.

Importantly, this check counts as working time, and drivers must be given adequate time to complete it properly.

## What to Check: A Systematic Approach

A good walkaround check is methodical, consistent, and thorough. It should follow a checklist and begin from the same starting point each time to ensure no area is missed. According to DVSA guidance, key areas for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) include:

- lights and indicators: Ensure all lamps are clean, functional, and display the correct colour and intensity. Check for any cracked lenses;
- tyres: Check tread depth, pressure (using a gauge), and for damage or embedded objects. Check wheel nuts for torque and security.



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## What to Check: A Systematic Approach (cont'd)

- brakes: Listen for air leaks, ensure couplings are free from debris, and visually inspect brake lines and connections for damage. If safe, test the foot and parking brakes for effective operation;
- steering: Check for any excessive play, and signs of wear, damage, or leaks;
- wipers and washers: Confirm they are functioning correctly, providing clear visibility across the entire windscreen. Check fluid levels for the washer reservoir;
- mirrors and glass: Ensure all mirrors are clean, correctly adjusted, undamaged, and provide an unobstructed view. Check all glass areas for cracks or chips that could impair vision or shatter. Make sure no clutter in the cabin affects the view;
- bodywork and load security: Inspect the vehicle's bodywork for any loose panels, damage, or sharp edges. Crucially, ensure the load is securely stowed, distributed correctly, and properly sheeted or covered if necessary. Check any tail-lifts or ramps for correct operation and security.
- fluid levels: Where accessible, check engine oil, coolant, power steering fluid, and brake fluid levels;
- vehicle documentation: Confirm the validity and presence of necessary documentation such as the insurance certificate, and, where applicable, the driver's tachograph card.

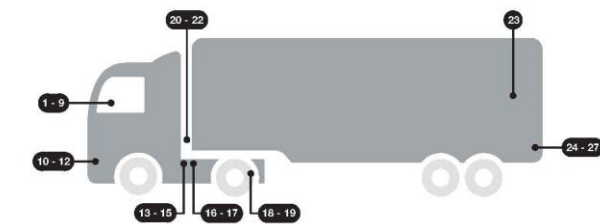
The HGV picture below can help point you to the places to check on an HGV and the DVSA have a video that can help you out. You can find it [here](#).

For Public Service Vehicles (PSVs), additional specific checks are vital, such as confirming all emergency exits are unobstructed and functional, passenger seating areas including seatbelts are secure and free from hazards.

The images below are also attached in a larger format so can be put on a notice board.

### HGV walkaround check

Allow plenty of time to check your vehicle is safe before you drive and remember this counts as working time. If your vehicle is not safe, you risk an incident, prohibition, fine and penalty points on your licence.



#### Check inside the vehicle

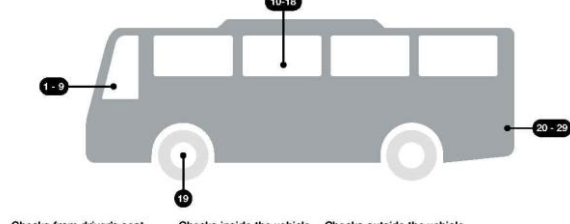
1. Rear view mirrors, cameras, and glass
2. Windscreen wipers and washers
3. Dashboard warning lights and gauges
4. Steering
5. Horn
6. Brakes and air build-up
7. Height marker
8. Seat belts and cab interior
9. Security and condition of exit, doors and steps

#### Check outside the vehicle

10. Lights and indicators
11. Fuel and oil leaks
12. Security of body and wings
13. Battery security and condition
14. Diesel exhaust fluid (AdBlue)
15. Excessive engine exhaust smoke
16. High voltage emergency cut-off switch
17. Alternative fuel systems and isolation
18. Spray suppression
19. Tyres and wheel fixing
20. Brake lines and trailer parking brake
21. Electrical connections
22. Chocking security
23. Security of load
24. Number plate
25. Reflections
26. Markings and warning plates
27. Other equipment

### PSV walkaround check

Allow plenty of time to check your vehicle is safe before you drive and remember this counts as working time. If your vehicle is not safe, you risk an incident, prohibition, fine and penalty points on your licence.



#### Checks from driver's seat

1. Front view mirrors, cameras, glass, and visibility
2. Windscreen wipers and washers
3. Warning lamps (inc ACMS, ABS, ESP)
4. Steering and Electronic Stability Control
5. Horn
6. Brakes and air build-up
7. Be sure to listen for air leaks
8. Height marker
9. Electronic ticket machine (ETM)
10. Drivers seat belt and cab interior

#### Checks inside the vehicle

11. Doors and exits
12. Accessibility equipment/operation
13. Seats and seat belts
14. Communication with the driver
15. Heating/ventilation
16. Fire extinguisher
17. First aid kit
18. Body interior

#### Checks outside the vehicle

19. Tyre and wheel fixing
20. Lights, indicators, side-reflectors, and reflectors
21. Number plate
22. Body exterior
23. Fuel/oil/water leaks
24. Excessive engine exhaust smoke
25. Diesel exhaust fluid (AdBlue)
26. Battery (if easily accessible)
27. Auxiliary equipment
28. High Voltage Emergency cut-off switch
29. Alternative fuel systems and isolation

If your vehicle is covered by [Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations](#), you must check that the accessibility features are in good condition.

## Reporting and Rectifying Defects

Identifying a defect is only the first step. Drivers must report defects clearly and promptly in writing. Whether using paper forms or digital systems, reports must be legible and accurate.

Operators are responsible for:

- Ensuring defects are repaired promptly by qualified personnel;
- Preventing vehicles with safety-critical defects from being used;
- Maintaining a complete audit trail from defect identification to repair and re-check.

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## Responsibilities of Operators and Transport Managers

While drivers carry out the checks, operators and Transport Managers are ultimately accountable. Their responsibilities include:

- **training:** Provide initial and ongoing training on how to perform walkaround checks report defects. Remedial training and disciplining drivers when things go wrong;
- **systems:** Implement robust systems for defect reporting, maintenance scheduling, and record-keeping.
- **monitoring & Auditing:** Conduct spot checks, review reports, and audit maintenance systems. Is your maintenance provider picking up defects your driver should have spotted?
- **providing the Tools:** Equip drivers with necessary tools, such as torches, and suitable paper defect checklist or user-friendly digital devices to facilitate accurate reporting.

## Consequences of Non-Compliance

Failure to carry out daily checks can result in:

- **roadside Prohibitions:** Vehicle prevented from further movement until the defect is rectified, leading to operational delays and potential fines;
- **finances and Penalties:** Financial penalties can be imposed on both drivers and operators for non-compliance;
- **OCRS Impact:** A poor Operator Compliance Risk Score (OCRS) can lead to increased DVSA scrutiny;
- **Regulatory Action by a Traffic Commissioner:**
  - **Operator:** Regulatory action may be taken such as licence curtailment, suspension, or revocation;
  - **Transport Manager:** Risk losing good reputation or professional competence, which could permanently impact their ability to act as a TM for any operator;
  - **Driver:** Drivers face potential vocational licence action, including suspension or revocation, jeopardising their career;
- **Accidents and Fatalities:** Defects, however minor, can contribute to serious accidents, leading to injuries and fatalities.

## Using Technology to Support Compliance

Digital walkaround check apps can improve accuracy, streamline reporting, and integrate with maintenance systems. However, they are support tools, not replacements for a physical inspection. The responsibility remains with the driver to conduct a thorough check.

## Conclusion

The daily walkaround check is a legal obligation and a critical safety measure. It protects lives, ensures compliance, and supports the integrity of commercial transport operations. Vigilance and consistency are essential.

## Call to Action:

- **Drivers:** Recommit to thorough and regular checks. Your vigilance protects lives and your career.
- **Operators and Transport Managers:** Review your systems and training. Are they robust enough to capture, report, and rectify defects efficiently?
- **Everyone:** Revisit the DVSA guidance for HGV and PSV and share best practices on social media.

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