

ISSUE NUMBER

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ISSUE NAME

Operational Policy 15 - Spare Fuses

STATUS

Closed

Vehicle Committee

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AGENCY

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Motor carriers are being issued warnings and/or citations in an unnecessary compound excessive manner for not being in compliance of 393.95(b) - Emergency equipment on all power units, Spare fuses.

JUSTIFICATION OR NEED

- This inspection item is inconsistently enforced as some enforcement officials lack the understanding to determine which, if any, fuses are necessary. Because relays and resettable fuses are more common than conventional fuses in commercial motor vehicles (CMVs), drivers and motor carriers can be cited for not having spares – despite the fact that some trucks do not require them. Additionally, there are multiple junction circuit boxes installed throughout a power unit where inspectors, knowingly or unknowingly, ignore. The problem is so pervasive that some fleets fill plastic sandwich bags with random fuses and tie them to their truck's in-cab fuse panel to pass visual inspection.
- Truck drivers are trained not to interfere with a vehicle's electronics. Although many drivers check that fuses are present during the pre-trip inspection, most do not know which components need spare fuses and which do not. Often, fuse panels are located underneath plates, dash panels, or protective under-hood covers that require the removal of fasteners to access. CMV drivers are frequently restricted from modifying or accessing the truck's electrical system. Accessing these compartments could even violate company rules regarding equipment tampering – even if drivers know spare fuses are available. Truck manufacturers and fleets are also concerned about fires from replacing fuses without diagnosing the reason for the fuse. If a truck is in need of a fuse replacement, and it is away from the shop, road service is can be dispatched for technicians to diagnose and repair known electrical issues. Last, it is not known how a blown fuse is disruptive to vehicle or traffic safety while the truck is in operation.
- Fleets report that officers find them in violation of 393.95(b) in times of driver confrontation and/or officer dictation. Trucks that nearly pass roadside inspection and leave with only a violation to 393.95(b) suggest either a driver confrontation with the officer or “worth the officer's time” enforcement misconduct for going through the effort.

REQUEST FOR ACTION

Remove the enforcement inspection item for 393.95(b).

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE

ATA technical advisory group has brought this issue forward to be discussed within the vehicle committee. Approximately 15,000 violations per year, for the past 4 year, have been documented on inspections for not being in compliance of 393.95(b) – Emergency equipment on all power units, spare fuses. Industry members commented that certain states are documenting violations. The regulation states that vehicles must be equipped with spare fuses on required accessories needing fuses. Relays and resettable fuses are more common than conventional fuses in newer commercial vehicles and many new trucks and buses do not require fuses at all.

Comments and discussion that the problem is a training issue. Jeremy Disbrow discussed that in Arizona, guidance was sent out that they must document with diagrams what the required fuse is. Comment was made that checking spare fuses is not being taught in CVSA Part B class. Question on where to put the guidance or whether a training bulletin should be created. It was the consensus of the committee to provide guidance within Operational Policy 15. FMCSA commented that they will talk with headquarters and commit to revising or removing the regulation. In the meantime, a motion was made to add guidance to Ops 15 as follows:

Operational Policy 15 Section XX

SPARE FUSES - Regulatory Guidance

b. (4) When should a violation be written for missing spare fuses?

ANSWER: Only power units for which fuses are needed to operate any required parts and accessories (e.g., lamps required by 393.11, the ABS system and visual low air warning system) must have at least one spare fuse for each type/size of fuse needed for those items. An inspector must be able to determine if fuses are necessary for required components and what fuses are applicable. Most newer model power units use breakers and no spare fuses are required.

When an inspector is unsure if fuses are required or what type of fuses are required, no violation should be recorded. Any violation of 393.95(b) shall be accompanied with a note indicating what required fuse was missing. Items such as the radio, non-required auxiliary lamps, etc., are not required to have spare fuses at any time.