In order to a proper Pre-trip inspection, a driver should follow the seven step inspection method. This method is done the same way each time so you will be less likely to forget something.

Step 1: The first thing you should do is notice the general condition of the vehicle: Look for damage on the sides of both tractor and trailer, the rear and any leaks under the carriage.

Step 2: Check the engine compartment: with the parking brakes on or the wheels chocked, raise the hood and check the following:

- Engine oil, Power steering fluid and coolant levels.
- Condition of the hoses.
- Windshield washer fluid level.
- Battery fluid level and connections.
- Automatic transmission fluid level.
- Check belts for tightness and excessive wear, they shouldn’t be cracked.
- Leaks in the engine compartment of fuel, coolant, oil, power steering fluid, hydraulic fluid, or battery fluid.
- Cracked, worn electrical wiring insulation.

Step 3: Inspect the cab: get in the tractor using the three points of contact, make sure your gearshift is in neutral and your breaks are on and start your engine.

- Your ABS indicator light should come on and then turn off.
- Inspect the gauges: Oil pressure, air pressure, voltmeter, coolant temperature, engine oil temperature. Any warning lights and buzzers should go out as soon as in normal operating ranges.
- Check condition of controls: make sure your brake controls (foot brake, trailer brake, parking brake and retarder); both your horns, and lights are working properly.
- Mirrors and windshield: check for cracks, dirt, illegal stickers, or other obstructions to seeing clearly. Make sure you don’t have anything in your dash as it reflects on your windshield and reduces visibility. Clean and adjust as necessary.
- Emergency equipment: your vehicle should be equipped with spare electrical fuses, three red reflective triangles and a charged secured fire extinguisher. Also check you have your accident kit, load locks or straps, permit book with all documents up to date and spare seals. It is recommended to have an emergency tool kit and fire changing equipment as well as chains during the winter time.
- Safety belt: check that it adjusts and latches properly.

Step 4: Turn your engine off and check your lights: turn your headlights on low beams and your four-way emergency flashers, take the key with you and get out of your vehicle using the three points of contact.
SEVEN STEP VEHICLE INSPECTION METHOD

Step 5: Walk around inspection: Go to the front of the vehicle and check that the low beams are on and both of the four-way flashers are working. Check the high beams, once done switch to low beams and check your right turn signal. You start on the driver side on the front and go around the vehicle:

- Check that all lights including the license plate light in the rear are operational and clean.
- Check that all reflectors are present and the right color (it should be red in the rear).
- Check all the wheels for missing, bent, broken studs, clamps, lugs, or any signs of misalignment.
- Check all the tires for proper inflation, valve stem and cap are OK, no serious cuts, bulges, or tread wear. Make sure there’s no rust on the lug nuts and that the oil level is good and has no leaks.
- Spare tire carrier or rack not damaged and Spare tire and/or wheel securely mounted in rack.
- Check the batteries, make sure they’re securely mounted and that the fluid levels are ok.
- Check the condition of axles, springs, spring hangers, shackles, u-bolts and shock absorbers as well as the brake drums and hoses.
- Fuel tank is securely mounted, cap is on and secured, and no leaks are visible.
- Transmission--not leaking.
- Exhaust system--secure, not leaking, not touching wires, fuel, or air lines.
- Air lines and electrical wiring--secured against snagging, rubbing, wearing.
- Frame and cross members--no bends or cracks.
- Check the splash guards, they should not be damaged, should be properly fastened, not dragging on the ground, or rubbing the tires.
- Make sure the License plates are present, clean, and secured.
- Repeat the steps on the passenger side and check the left turn signal.

Step 6: Check signal Lights: get in your vehicle and turn all lights off. Apply your pedal brake and check the stop light. Check your reverse light.

Step 7: Brake system check:

- To check the hydraulic brakes, pump the brake pedal three times. Then apply firm pressure to the pedal and hold for five seconds. The pedal should not move. If it does, there may be a leak or other problem. Get it fixed before driving.
- To check your parking brakes, set the parking brake and release the trailer parking brake. Place the vehicle into a low gear and gently pull forward against parking brake to make sure the parking brake holds. Repeat the same steps for the trailer with trailer parking brake set and power unit parking brakes released. If it doesn’t hold, it is faulty; and you must get it fixed.
- To check your service brakes, go about five miles per hour, push the brake pedal firmly. Any “Pulling” to one side or the other and any unusual brake pedal delayed stopping action can mean trouble.