

Safety Equipment for Company Vehicles

Note: This article does not cover safe-driving practices or safely securing materials and equipment. For those topics, see the [May 2013](#) and [November 2015](#) safety articles.

Key Points

- Motor-vehicle accidents are a top safety concern and a major source of insurance claims within the landscape industry. Parked trucks and trailers can even be a hazard, as discussed in [last month's safety article](#). When an incident or breakdown inevitably occurs, having the necessary emergency and safety equipment on board the company vehicle is vital. Company vehicles also must carry safety-related items crews might need at jobsites.
- In addition, if your company vehicles are classified as commercial motor vehicles, you must comply with U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations, which require equipping trucks with certain emergency- and safety-related items. Company vehicles can be stopped for inspection, and your company can be fined if the items are not present. Other federal, state and local regulations can require landscape vehicles to be equipped with particular items as well.
- Properly equipping landscape vehicles with safety- and emergency-related gear can prevent accidents or secondary accidents, save lives and reduce costs. For the best outcome, management and employees should work together to make sure equipment is in place and crew members know where to find it and how to use it.

Management Checklist

- ✓ Know what safety- and emergency-related equipment and items should be carried in your company's vehicles. This will depend, to an extent, on your particular operations and regulations that apply to your firm.
- ✓ Understand FMCSA considers a pickup truck a commercial motor vehicle if it transports hazardous material (49 U.S.C. 5103 and 49 CFR, subtitle B, chapter I, subchapter C) or if the weight of a pickup truck, trailer, and load (or gross vehicle weight rating or gross combination weight rating) exceeds 10,000 pounds. If these conditions are met, your company likely needs to apply for a U.S. DOT number and follow associated DOT/FMCSA regulations (answer questions [here](#) to find out).
- ✓ Be aware section [393.95 of the FMCSA regulations](#) requires commercial motor vehicles to be equipped with at least:
 - Three bi-directional emergency reflective triangles;
 - Six flares capable of burning for 30 minutes; or
 - Three liquid burning flares that contain enough fuel to burn continuously for at least 60

minutes.

- Fire extinguisher (s) – If the vehicle is not used to transport hazardous materials: A fire extinguisher with an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 5 B:C or more or two fire extinguishers, each with UL rating of 4 B:C or more. If the vehicle is used to transport hazardous materials: A fire extinguisher with a UL rating of 10 B:C or more. Fire extinguishers must use an extinguishing agent that does not need protection from freezing and must be filled and readily accessible for use. They should be securely mounted to prevent sliding, rolling or vertical movement relative to the motor vehicle.

-Spare fuses, if fuses are needed to operate any required vehicle parts and accessories. The vehicle must be equipped with at least one spare fuse for each type/size of fuse needed.

- ✓ Follow all other federal, state and local regulations pertaining to emergency- and safety-related equipment/items required for your company's vehicles.
- ✓ In addition to the items listed above, landscape companies should equip each truck with:
 - Orange cones
 - A first-aid kit. Per federal OSHA regulations, the kit should contain "basic supplies necessary to address typical work site first aid needs" and kit contents should be in sealed packages within weatherproof containers. First-aid kits should contain at least two sets of latex and/or vinyl gloves (for workers with latex allergies) and devices such as face shields, biohazard bags and pocket masks to protect first-aid providers from blood or other fluids. Other supplies should reflect the kinds of injuries likely to occur in your company.
 - Spill kits and related supplies appropriate for any chemicals being transported
 - Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for chemicals being transported and any chemicals crew members could contact on the jobsite. Consider creating an SDS binder for every company vehicle. In an emergency, SDSs must be immediately available to employees and medical personnel (federal OSHA requirement).
 - Emergency eyewash stations workers can access within 10 seconds or approximately 55 feet if they get chemicals in their eyes (federal OSHA requirement). Portable eyewash stations ideal for landscaping jobsites are available. (See more info about chemical precautions [here](#))
 - Wheel chocks or blocks
 - Reflective gear for the maximum number of crew members the vehicle could carry
 - Bags with seasonal gear (extra gloves, water, blanket, bug repellent, rain ponchos, etc.) for the maximum number of crew members the vehicle could carry
 - Extra safety gear including hearing protection and safety glasses/goggles
 - Soap and a gallon of water for washing skin after chemical exposure
 - Jumper cables
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - Duct tape
 - Tools to perform basic vehicle repairs, especially in relation to common breakdown causes
- ✓ Make sure employees know the locations of SDSs, eyewash stations, reflective gear, first-aid kits and extra safety and seasonal gear within company vehicles.
- ✓ Train employees to properly use spill kits.

- ✓ Teach workers to use the items in your first-aid kits. For additional guidance on first aid, click [here](#).
- ✓ Make it the driver's responsibility to ensure all necessary safety equipment/supplies are in the vehicle before each trip.

Crew members' dos and don'ts

Do:

- Be aware which emergency- and safety-related supplies are stored in the company vehicles in which you travel (see lists above).
- Know where within vehicles to find these supplies, including safety data sheets (SDSs), eyewash stations, reflective gear, first-aid kits and extra safety and seasonal gear.
- Know whether company vehicles you drive are classified as commercial motor vehicles and have U.S. DOT numbers. If so, you must stop at roadside-inspections stations, and the vehicle could be inspected at other times as well. Among other things, inspectors will check cargo securement and whether required emergency- and safety-related items are present.

Don't

- Drive a company vehicle without ensuring all necessary emergency and safety equipment/supplies are on board. It's your responsibility to do this before each trip.
- Transport any chemical until you have received and understood training in how to contain it using a spill kit.

NALP Safety and Risk Management Committee member Bryce Christianson of Titan Sitework contributed information to this safety article.

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