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Serious Safety Violations Found During Crackdown On Commercial Vehicles

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- North Carolina state troopers launched a crackdown on commercial vehicles breaking safety laws early Wednesday.

The Highway Patrol brought in 40 additional troopers to run the checkpoint that aims to reduce collisions between tractor-trailers and other vehicles. Troopers are giving 37-point inspections to each 18-wheeler and interviewing drivers.

The troopers are looking for bad tires, failing brakes, drowsy drivers and other safety violations. Highway Patrol commander Fletcher Clay says he told troopers to be aggressive about commercial vehicles' safety violations.

"A lot of these trucks travel overweight, and it makes it hard to stop these large vehicles," said Capt. Marc Nichols of the Highway Patrol.

In some cases, even a small violation could equal a hefty fine.

Troopers had already found some very serious violations by noon on Wednesday. One tractor trailer driver was going down the road on a blown-out tire. He was taken off the roadway and won't be allowed back on until the tire is fixed.

Highway Patrol officials said they chose to do the crackdown in Mecklenburg County because of the frequency of commercial vehicle wrecks and the number of fatal crashes involving commercial vehicles. In fact, when it comes to truck crashes, Mecklenburg County has one of the worst records in the state.

Officials are having trucks pull into the state's Welcome Center on Interstate 77. The North Carolina Department of Transportation warned that drivers may run into some congestion near this area.

The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Department is assisting in the inspections. A similar operation is going on across the South Carolina border.

Operation Road Watch will last through Friday.

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