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Province wide traffic blitz targets troublesome trucks

By KEVIN CRUSH, SUN MEDIA

A provincial blitz against bad trucks left at least one trucker kicking himself yesterday.

"I should have fixed it a day earlier, I guess. I can't afford this damn tow truck bill," said Neil Zerb after being pulled over by police in south Edmonton during a commercial vehicle safety inspection three-day blitz.

On the first day, 109 trucks were inspected, with 32 deemed out of service and eight needing to be towed.

An hour after starting, they had taken two trucks off the road and 22 drivers received Highway Traffic Act charges.

Typically, around 35% of trucks pulled over will have to be towed, said city police traffic Staff Sgt. Barry Maron.

"I've seen some very, very poor trucks. Some with major frame cracks, some with brake problems. I've actually inspected trucks myself where one steering tire was the only braking efficiency in the whole 18 wheels."

During a similar event last fall, 339 vehicles were checked, and 158 taken out of service, raising questions of how safe Alberta roads are.

Maron said in many cases, the issue might be a simple fix, such as an insecure load, and the truck is back at work in short order.

Inspectors can use a thermal camera that can pick up issues, like unusually hot wheels that can indicate a brake problem, as trucks pass by, allowing inspectors to be selective over the vehicles they target.

For truckers, stops mean delayed jobs, but for some, it's worth it.

"We don't want anybody killed just because some stupid chain was dragging on the road. It's unfortunate, but it's a reality," said Brent Whitford, 25, driver with Kingsway Towing Group.

The blitz runs until tomorrow.