

Motor Vehicle Inspection Division

In response to initiatives to create federal highway safety standards, Missouri Senate Bill 6 was approved during the 1967 legislative session creating the requirement for annual motor vehicle safety inspections in Missouri. The law was to become effective January 1, 1969; however, provisions of the law permitted vehicle owners to obtain a safety inspection 30 days prior to the day on which the annual registration fee was paid. Therefore, it was necessary to begin the inspection program on December 1, 1968, to serve those vehicle owners whose vehicle license was due for renewal in January 1969.

On May 16, 1968, 31 troopers received training regarding the motor vehicle safety inspection law and regulations at the Highway Patrol's Academy in Rolla, MO, to become program supervisors. The mechanical and technical portions of the curriculum were conducted at a facility previously occupied by Mel Block Chevrolet in Rolla. After training, the troopers began setting up inspection stations within their assigned areas starting July 1, 1968. According to retired Captain Larry Walker, it required quite a bit of convincing to entice repair shop operators to apply for licensure in this new program.

Lieutenant Ernest Van Winkle was appointed director of the safety inspection program, and on November 4, 1969, Corporal Larry Walker transferred to headquarters from Troop I as the assistant director.

Initially, the new inspection requirement was not well received due to perceived improprieties at inspection stations. For example, headlight aim was an original requirement in the inspection process. Due to the many factors that would affect headlight aim, such as fuel tank level, an unacceptable number of vehicles were rejected and the vehicle owners were charged, in many cases, an unreasonable fee to adjust the vehicle's headlights. The headlight aim portion of the regulations was removed from the inspection procedure in late January 1969, at the insistence of Governor Warren Hearnes during a meeting with Colonel E.I. "Mike" Hockaday. As a result of this and other related issues, the Missouri Legislature passed a bill during the 1970 session of the General Assembly that would have repealed the safety inspection law. Gov. Hearnes vetoed the bill, ultimately saving the inspection program.

The many responsibilities of the road officers detracting their attention from their safety inspection duties; therefore, a suggestion was made to consider utilizing civilian employees to supervise inspection stations. In response, Captain Bill Dolan, commanding officer of Troop C at that time, assigned two commercial vehicle inspectors, Al Neifert and John Evenstad, to the Motor Vehicle Inspection (MVI) unit in June 1972. This six-month pilot program lasted a full year as the benefits of civilian station supervisors were realized.

On September 30, 1974, 27 civilian employees from the ranks of the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division and the Driver Examination Division began training at the Patrol's Law Enforcement Academy in Jefferson City, to become motor vehicle inspectors. Upon completion of their training, on October 10, 1974, these men returned to their respective troops to take over the supervision of inspection stations as well as the school bus inspection process. The inspection of school buses was required by law to be conducted by the Highway Patrol annually after the first of February. The new motor vehicle inspectors were supervised at the troop level

by uniformed members who were also assigned inspection stations. These members also took care of the administrative process and made MVI-related arrests. At this time, the division was under the direction of Captain Charles Whitehead.

The Motor Vehicle Inspection Division began as an independent program within the Patrol's structure. However, structural changes over time were implemented that combined MVI with other civilian divisions. For example, at one time during the early '70s, Captain Whitehead was in charge of the CVE and MVI divisions. In another structural change, all three uniformed civilian divisions--CVE, DE, and MVI divisions--were combined under the direction of Captain Jesse Luker, with Lieutenant Lawrence Webb serving as the director of the MVI section.

In 1983, Senate Bill 315 was signed into law creating an emission inspection requirement in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, and St. Charles County. This requirement was a result of the federal Clean Air Act that declared these counties to be in air quality non-compliance. The responsibility for the emission inspection program fell to the MVI Division and was combined with the safety inspection program. Preparation for the implementation of the BAR 74 emission inspection program was intensive, requiring research, training, and much additional work by the MVI Division personnel under the direction of Captain Jim Gaines.

Many safety inspection stations initially chose not to purchase the emission inspection analyzers and participate in the emission inspection process. However, nearly all inspection stations that participated in the safety program in the non-attainment area prior to the emission requirement were licensed as safety/emission inspection stations within two years. Over time, additional inspectors were assigned to the MVI unit at Troop C to absorb the added responsibility of the emission inspection program.

On September 1, 1988, Capt. Gaines was reassigned to the Driver Examination Division and Captain Joe Faber was appointed the director of the MVI Division. He served in that position until his retirement, when Captain Larry Walker was appointed division director on June 1, 1990. Following Capt. Walker's retirement, Lieutenant David Reynolds was appointed division director on September 1, 1991. A change in administration sent Captain Roy Foss to the MVI Division as director on October 21, 1991. In 1994, yet another restructuring combined MVI with DE, and Captain Bill Nelson was tasked with overseeing both sections.

The first Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) School was conducted June 17 through 28, 1996, with 27 students consisting of 25 MVI inspectors, and a corporal and a sergeant assigned to the Division of Drug and Crime Control (DDCC). Seven new personnel were hired to assist troop members with conducting salvage vehicle examinations in an effort to reduce the use of stolen parts to rebuild vehicles. These seven VIN inspectors were subsequently trained as MVI inspectors as well as being trained in salvage procedures. A Field Training Program (FTP) was established in June 1999, to standardize initial training to inspectors. When five or more new inspectors have been hired, a more formal MVI/VIN Basic School is conducted at the Patrol's Law Enforcement Academy at General Headquarters.

The MVI and DE sections were once again divided into individual divisions in November 1996, and Captain L.E. "Gene" Lacy was appointed as division director of MVI. Under his direction, the School Bus Total Fleet Excellence Award was established as an annual recognition

for school districts. Contractors receiving an approval rating of 90 percent or better during the Patrol's inspection received this award. Additionally, plans were finalized for the first MVI/DE "supersite" to be located in the Troop A, Lee's Summit, area. Driver examiners administer driver examinations and commercial driver's license (CDL) examinations, and Motor Vehicle Inspection Division personnel conduct MVI business and VIN/salvage examinations at the facility. The supersite opened September 1, 1998.

When Capt. Lacy was promoted to major in May 1998, Captain James D. Whitfield was appointed division director. During the 1999 legislative session, Senate Bill 19 was signed into law creating a biennial safety inspection requirement. Vehicles with an odd model year are required to receive a safety inspection for registration renewal during odd calendar years, and even model year vehicles are required to be inspected during even model years. Additionally, new vehicles became exempt for the first two calendar years following their model year of manufacture.

In other legislation, the emission inspection program was assigned solely to the Department of Natural Resources. A contract was awarded to a private vendor and centralized emission inspections began in the non-attainment area at test only locations. A total of nine inspector positions were eliminated from the Troop C MVI Unit due to the reduction of responsibility.

On April 28, 2000, the Troop F MVI/CDL supersite opened on the west side of Jefferson City.

In June 2000, MVI Supervisor James (Bill) Watkins was promoted to chief motor vehicle inspector and replaced Senior Chief Barry Bean, who retired. Chief MVI Watkins was promoted to senior chief motor vehicle inspector on June 1, 2001.

Lieutenant David Perkins was appointed division director on August 1, 2003. In September 2004, Senior Chief Motor Vehicle Inspector Watkins was appointed as the first civilian assistant division director.

Effective August 28, 2006, Senate Bill 583 ended the centralized emission inspection program and created the requirement for an automated decentralized emission inspection process. The intent of the legislation was to combine safety and emission inspections and establish "on-board diagnostic emission inspections" at safety inspection stations in the St. Louis non-attainment area. The Motor Vehicle Inspection Division was once again in the emission inspection business, partnered with the Department of Natural Resources. Working together, the agencies began to plan and develop the Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program (GVIP). Following a lengthy bid process, a contract was awarded to SysTech International, a Utah-based company, to develop and provide computer hardware and software to be utilized in the on-board diagnostic inspection process and to maintain a vehicle inspection database where all safety and emission inspection information from GVIP stations would be held and provided to the Department of Revenue for real-time registration processes. The program was implemented on October 1, 2007, one month after the previous centralized contract expired. On October 28, 2007, MVI Chief Paul Rehbein was transferred from Troop C to GHQ, promoted to senior chief, and designated the emissions coordinator. He is the first emissions coordinator for the Patrol.

On September 1, 2007, Lt. Perkins was promoted to the rank of captain and remained the director of the MVI Division.

A new MVI/DE supersite opened in Rolla, Troop I, to conduct MVI VIN/Salvage Examinations, Inspector/Mechanic (I/M) Training and CDL/Driver Testing. The new supersite at 3180 Koch Road (Old Jefferson Barracks rest area) opened in October 2008.

Effective January 1, 2010, House Bill 683 amended Section 301.350 RSMo. to exempt motor vehicles for the five-year period following their model year of manufacture. This amendment excludes prior salvage vehicles immediately following a rebuilding process and vehicles registered in excess of 24,000 pounds for a period of less than 12 months. Six-year and older vehicles are still required to have biennial inspections for registration based on the odd/odd and even/even rule.

On March 1, 2010, Captain Perkins was reassigned to the Training Division, and Lieutenant Malik A. Henderson was promoted to captain and appointed division director.

In July 2010, the Motor Vehicle Inspection Division's school bus inspection committee amended the criteria required for school districts to earn the Total Fleet Excellence Award. Henceforth, school districts must have an approval rating of 90 percent or better during the Patrol's annual inspection, with no buses placed out-of-service during the inspection.

On January 1, 2011, inspectors became responsible for conducting hull identification number verifications on boats, motors, and trailers as a result of the merging of the Missouri State Water Patrol into the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

Chief MVI Roger D. Cross was promoted to senior chief and named assistant director of the Motor Vehicle Inspection Division on July 15, 2012. Senior Chief MVI James (Bill) Watkins retired on August 1, 2012.

On July 1, 2013, Captain Henderson was reassigned to the Professional Standards Division. Captain Lester D. Elder was appointed director of the Motor Vehicle Inspection Division. During the same year, the division implemented an online system which allowed inspection stations to order and pay for their inspection supplies via the Internet. The online system was well-received and utilized by motor vehicle safety inspection stations and GVIP stations.

On May 1, 2014, the Missouri State Highway Patrol reorganized the Motor Vehicle Bureau Unit within the Division of Drug and Crime Control. As a result, the MVI Division acquired additional responsibilities to include stolen vehicle checks for titling paperwork prior to DOR title issuance, creating replacement VIN plates, verifying replacements VINs have been properly attached, checking 10-year-old vehicles scrapped without a title for stolen status, and notifying the proper law enforcement agencies when a stolen entry is discovered, so investigations can be performed within their jurisdictions. Larry Schrader, from the MVB Unit, transferred to the division as an MVI analyst to handle these additional responsibilities.

MVI Supervisor Daniel A. Gregory was promoted to motor vehicle inspection chief and transferred to the General Headquarters complex on March 13, 2016. Senior Chief MVI Roger Cross retired from the Missouri State Highway Patrol on April 1, 2016.

The Motor Vehicle Inspection Division consists of 60 full-time motor vehicle inspectors assigned in the troops to supervise safety inspection stations (and, within Troop C, emission

stations), conduct VIN/salvage examinations, perform school bus inspections, approve and sign motor vehicle dealer and salvage operator license applications, and conduct HIN verifications on boats, motors, and trailers. The GHQ staff of the Motor Vehicle Inspection Division consists of the director, assistant director, emissions program coordinator, one clerk IV, two MVI analysts, one fiscal and budgetary analyst, and three clerk typists.