



## Is your vehicle's “Check Engine” light on?

If it is, and your vehicle is model year 1996 or newer, **it will not pass** a vehicle emissions test in Canyon County or Kuna. This brochure explains why and what you can do to help ensure your vehicle passes the vehicle emissions test.

If your vehicle is model year 1995 or older, the “Check Engine” light does not always tell you what you need to know about your emissions. For more information about emissions testing for 1995 and older vehicles, see the *Failed emissions test?* brochure at [www.idahoVIP.org](http://www.idahoVIP.org).

## Quick Facts about the Vehicle Emissions Testing Program in Canyon County and Kuna

- Gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles that are model year 1981 and newer but older than five years must be tested, unless they are exempt.
- Certain vehicles are exempt, including some classic automobiles and motor homes, motorized farm equipment, agricultural vehicles, electric and hybrid vehicles, and vehicles five years old or newer.
- Testing is required every other year. Motorists are notified of their testing month by mail, or you can check online at [www.idahoVIP.org](http://www.idahoVIP.org).
- An emissions test costs \$11 per vehicle test, the fee is due at the time of testing. A motorist is allowed one free re-test, if completed within 30 days of the previous and at the same station.
- Testing is available at more than 20 conveniently located testing locations at small businesses throughout Canyon County and Kuna.
- Failure to obtain an emissions test can result in the vehicle's registration being revoked.

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## Check engine light on?



## 1996 or newer vehicle?

Tips for passing a  
vehicle emissions test  
in Canyon County  
and Kuna



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## What does the “Check Engine” light mean?

The “Check Engine” light indicates a problem with the vehicle’s emissions. In vehicles with an on-board diagnostic (OBD-II) system, the system has detected an emissions problem and recorded a fault code. The check engine light comes on only for emissions-related malfunctions, according to federal regulations. Most 1996 and newer vehicles have OBD-II systems.

## What is an on-board diagnostic (OBD-II) system?

An OBD-II system monitors the performance of emissions control devices while the vehicle is being driven. An OBD-II system consists of software and hardware that make these self-checks possible. OBD-II is designed to detect any emission faults, especially those that could cause emissions to exceed the federal emission standard by 50%. When an OBD-II test is performed during a vehicle emissions test, an inspector downloads emissions information stored by a vehicle’s OBD-II system.

## How is an OBD-II test conducted?

Idaho’s OBD-II inspection involves three steps.

1. The inspector visually checks the vehicle for required emissions control devices and ensures that the gas cap is properly sealed.
2. The inspector verifies the “Check Engine” light bulb is working and does not stay on when the engine is started.
3. The inspector plugs the analyzer into the vehicle’s OBD-II diagnostic link connector to access the on-board computer, which then reports the status of the OBD-II system.

## How does an OBD-II test evaluate emissions?

An OBD-II test procedure downloads three pieces of information from the OBD-II system.

- **The check engine light on/off status:**  
The check engine light turns on when the same emissions fault has been detected more than once. This light alerts the driver that the vehicle needs to be repaired.
- **Diagnostic trouble codes (DTCs):**  
When emissions faults are detected, DTCs (fault codes) are recorded. These codes indicate which component might be causing an emissions problem and can help mechanics make appropriate repairs.
- **The status of OBD-II system readiness monitors:**  
Readiness monitors are OBD-II programs that monitor a specific set of emissions control devices under different driving conditions. Only monitors that are “ready” can determine if emission control devices are functioning properly. For more about readiness monitors, see the frequently asked questions at [www.idahoVIP.org](http://www.idahoVIP.org).

An OBD-II test can also detect tampering—the removal or alteration of essential emissions control devices.

## Why can’t I have a tailpipe test instead of an OBD-II test?

An OBD-II test is more thorough than the two-speed idle (tailpipe) test and can check both emissions from a tailpipe and evaporative emissions. It is also less time-consuming. If possible, an OBD-II test would be a component of all emissions tests. However, older vehicles are not equipped with the technology that makes OBD-II testing possible.

## My car didn’t pass the OBD-II test. What should I do?

- If the check engine light will not illuminate when the engine is off and the key is on, the bulb and/or circuitry must be repaired.
- If the check engine light stays illuminated when the engine is turned on, the OBD-II system has found an emissions control problem that needs to be repaired.
- If readiness monitors are not set, it may be because the battery has been disconnected or replaced, or the car has had recent maintenance in which the DTCs have been cleared with an OBD scan tool. In most cases, driving normally for an additional 1–2 weeks (up to 1,000 miles) will reset the readiness monitors, or you can perform a generic drive cycle—for instructions, see the frequently asked questions at [www.idahoVIP.org](http://www.idahoVIP.org).

## I can’t afford expensive repairs. What should I do?

Check to see if you qualify for a one-year repair or hardship waiver. Waiver instructions and forms can be found at [www.idahoVIP.org](http://www.idahoVIP.org) or at any emissions testing location.

## My check engine light is on so I know my vehicle will fail an emissions test. What good will it do to have the test?

OBD-II tests often reveal DTCs that can help an individual to determine what is wrong with a vehicle. In some cases, repairs can be as simple as installing a new gas cap.

A failed emissions test is necessary to qualify for a repair waiver.