Correct as at 14th May 2026. It may be superseded at any time.

Extract taken from: Entry certification > Inspection and certification > Vehicle structure > Inspection specifications

3-3 Inspection specifications

The vehicle inspector must personally carry out a full structural inspection of the vehicle.

Every vehicle must be inspected for existing accident damage, structural repairs, corrosion or evidence of water or fire damage (see **Technical bulletin 2**). Any damage, deterioration or repairs to structural areas of the vehicle outside the limits set by the threshold must be recorded on LANDATA and the vehicle referred to a specialist repair certifier (Note 11).

The threshold for requiring specialist repair certification must be strictly met. See **Vehicle structure – 3-4 Threshold for requiring specialist repair certification**

If a vehicle was flagged for damage by the border inspection organisation (BIO) and then presented in a repaired state, it must be referred to a specialist repair certifier.

Damage or deterioration does not require either repair or specialist certification provided it is within the limits established in **Vehicle structure – 3-4 Threshold for requiring specialist repair certification**

If a vehicle is failed as a result of structural damage, it cannot be certified until the vehicle has been inspected and certified by a specialist repair certifier.

A three-dimensional (3D) chassis measurement must be carried out on all light vehicles undergoing repair certification, unless the vehicle has been referred to a specialist repair certifier as a result of corrosion damage. However, if the corrosion damage is extensive enough to cause distortion or partial collapse of the existing vehicle structure, 3D measurement must be carried out.

A vehicle referred to a specialist repair certifier may be returned with an LT307 No repair certification required declaration if the damage or previous repairs are assessed as minor/non-structural. See **Reference material 79** for a sample LT307. If the vehicle has a damage flag this can be lifted using the LT307 as a basis for the flag removal.

Pre-1991 vehicles

Trim does not need to be removed as part of the structural inspection if the vehicle was:

- manufactured before 1991, and
- previously registered in New Zealand before 1 January 1991.

However, a structural inspection must be carried out. If the vehicle fails the structural inspection, it must be referred to a specialist repair certifier and undergo the same repair certification process as any other vehicle that has failed the entry level structural inspection process.

Scratch-built low volume vehicles

Trim does not need to be removed as part of the structural inspection if a vehicle is a scratch-built low volume vehicle certified by category LV1D, LV2B or LV2C authorised LVV certifiers. However, a full general inspection must be carried out. The vehicle inspector may require an invasive structural inspection if any areas of concern are identified during the general inspection.

Parallel-imported new vehicles

A full structural inspection is required for parallel-imported new vehicles. However, an application for an exemption from the requirement to remove trim is likely to be accepted. See **Reference material 18** for a template of the 'Request for trim removal exemption'.

1 Structural inspection

During entry-level certification, vehicles of class MA, MB, MC, MD1, MD2 and NA must undergo an invasive structural inspection, according to the following specifications.

1. Before inspecting a vehicle, the following trim items must be completely removed from the vehicle (other than pillar trims referred to in the notes):

a) door aperture windlaces and sealing strips

b) door sill plates

c) all upper and lower pillar trims necessary to expose:

i. previous repair and corrosion damage

ii. seatbelt anchorages

d) rear seat squab (unless fully hinged)

e) boot aperture rubbers or sealing strips

f) boot sidewall trim, floor coverings and spare wheel

g) front inner guard covers fitted to monocoque construction vehicles. (Note 1)

h) front sub-frame splash guards. (Note 2)

Note 1

Front inner guard covers do not need to be completely removed from the vehicle; they can hang from one mounting point provided it is possible to view the structure of the vehicle with the guard cover in that position.

Note 2

Front sub-frame splash guards only need to be loosened so that they can be pulled down and the front underbody structure fully viewed.

Note 3

Pillar trims only need to be completely removed from the mounting surface (they can hang from the seat belt webbing). They do not need to be removed from the vehicle.

Note 4

It is not necessary on all vehicles to remove the 'A' pillar trim as part of the structural inspection. The vehicle inspector can ask for the 'A' pillar trim to be removed if there is reason to believe that the trim is covering evidence of damage, previous repair or corrosion.

Note 5

Boot sidewall trim only needs to be removed if it is not possible to view the vehicle structure with the trim in place.

Note 6

This is the minimum amount of trim removal necessary to enable a vehicle inspector to identify any damage, deterioration or poor repairs to structural areas of the vehicle. In many instances it will be necessary to remove additional trim (splashguards etc) to enable a vehicle inspector to identify the full extent of the structural damage, deterioration or previous repairs.

2. Before commencing the inspection, the vehicle inspector must check the exterior of the vehicle for any signs of previous crash repairs under appropriate lighting conditions (as specified in **section 8(1.3) and (1.6)** of the Introduction to this manual). Evidence of previous repairs may be indicated in any of the following ways:

a) mismatch of paint colour or finish

b) uneven ride height

c) wrinkles in side panels, doors and roof

d) misaligned wheels

e) uneven gaps between body panels (fenders, bonnet, doors and boot).

3. The following items must be inspected on each vehicle:

a) Engine compartment

• front crush zones	• firewall
• chassis rails	• suspension towers and mountings
• inner guards	• radiator support panel

b) Exterior

• door frames, locks and hinges	• pillars
• sills (Note 7)	• roof guttering

Note 7

Where a vehicle is fitted with full sill exterior plastic body kits, which completely cover the exterior sill so that it is not possible to remove without damaging beyond repair, the body kit only needs to be removed if the vehicle inspector believes there are underlying problems with the sill.

c) Luggage/cargo compartment

• suspension towers and mountings	• seatbelt anchorages
• floor	• rear panel
• spare wheel well	

d) Underbody and/or chassis frame

• front and rear crush zones	• sub-frame mountings
• chassis rails and cross-members	• seatbelt anchorages
• floor rails	• sills
• floor	• steering and suspension mountings

e) Passenger compartment (inside vehicle)

• exposed floor areas	• cross-members
• floor to inner sill seams	• seat and seatbelt anchorages
• pillars	

Note 8

The vehicle inspector must fully extend every seatbelt to ensure that the entire length of the seatbelt is inspected.

The underbody inspection must be carried out under specified lighting conditions, using any of the following equipment:

- an inspection pit
- a vehicle hoist
- a ramp of adequate height that allows the inspector to comfortably walk under the vehicle to inspect all crush zones, chassis rails, sills and cross-members.

Note 9

If seatbelt anchorage bolts are removed as part of the structural inspection process they must be reassembled using a calibrated torque wrench.

2 Evidence of inspection

The vehicle inspector must place some form of unique mark to identify the person carrying out the structural inspection (eg inspector initials as identified in the QMS/PRS Staff Record) at each concealed location inspected. This provides evidence of the inspection and a form of quality control.

For all concealed upper and lower outboard seatbelt anchorages, the unique identification marks must be placed within 50mm of these.

3 Reassembly

Where components are removed as part of the inspection process, an IO must have procedures in place to ensure that those components are reassembled correctly.

4 Trim removal exemption

Under some circumstances it is not practicable to remove the trim in a motor vehicle.

Examples of such cases are:

• chiller vans	• vehicles fitted with airbags in the roof or pillars
• motorhomes	• late–model, high specification, ‘expensive’ vehicles

In such instances, IOs may apply to NZ Transport agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) for an exemption from the requirement to remove the interior trim.

Before NZTA can process an exemption for a specific vehicle, the IO must structurally inspect the vehicle and complete an application for an exemption from trim removal requirements (see **Reference material 18**).

Once NZTA has received the application, an NZTA Certification Officer or nominated person will contact the entry certifier to arrange a date and time for the vehicle to be inspected.

1. The vehicle should be available on a hoist. The NZTA staff member or nominated person will advise which items such as door rubbers, inner guards and under body panels need to be removed for the purposes of the inspection.

2. The IO must provide the Certification Officer with a copy of the structural inspection sheet.

3. The Certification Officer will physically inspect the vehicle. NZTA will consider the following factors when processing an application for exemption from trim removal:

• the type of vehicle	• the condition of the vehicle
• the age of the vehicle	• whether the vehicle can be easily stripped
• the vehicle's safety features	• whether the vehicle can be partially stripped

4. If any evidence of structural damage, repairs or corrosion damage is found, the application will be declined.

Note 10

An application may be reconsidered if a specialist repair certifier inspects the vehicle and issues an LT307 certificate (for a light vehicle - see **Reference material 79** for a sample certificate) or a statement on letterhead from a heavy vehicle specialist certifier (for heavy vehicles) that confirms there is no damage, repairs or corrosion.

5 The Certification Officer will consider the application and notify the applicant of the outcome.

a) If the Certification Officer considers that stripping the vehicle would not pose difficulties or damage the vehicle, the application for a trim removal exemption will be declined. A letter of notification will be sent to the applicant.

b) If the Certification Officer believes there is sufficient reason to grant an exemption from trim removal requirements, the Certification Officer will approve a full or partial trim removal exemption. An 'exemption to remove trim on an imported used vehicle' letter describing any special conditions will be sent to the entry certifier, and a copy will be sent to the applicant.

IMPORTANT: **Technical bulletin 11** describes the requirements for carrying out the inspection of motorhomes.

Note 11

Specialist repair certifier in this case means a light vehicle repair certifier or heavy vehicle specialist certifier as applicable to the vehicle class.

Page amended **1 November 2014** (see **amendment details**).

Page updated 19 November 2021 (see **details**).