



# The Times

## 59 city police cars fail inspections

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TRENTON - A total of 59 vehicles - nearly half of the city police department's total fleet - failed state motor vehicle inspections recently, a police spokesman confirmed yesterday.

The spokesman also said an internal review of the police repair garage operations is under way.

Of 63 police vehicles inspected recently at the state Motor Vehicle Commission's Bakers Basin inspection station on Route 1, only four passed, Detective Sgt. Pedro Medina said.

He said 22 vehicles failed emission tests; 20 failed for "minor" problems such as faulty headlight or windshield wipers; 15 failed for "moderate" brake- or suspension-related problems; and two failed for registration issues.

The vehicles were sent for checkups after Police Director Joseph Santiago noticed some vehicles were overdue for inspection, he said.

There are a total of 120 vehicles of various kinds in the police fleet, Medina said.

He said efforts started immediately to correct the problems discovered by the inspections.

He said the inspection failures have not created a shortage of police vehicles for patrol officers because state law allows a grace period for violations to be fixed. Thus, some vehicles will remain on the road, he said.

Medina said the vehicles that remain in use are safe. He said state inspectors did not order any vehicles immediately off the road.

He said the city recently ordered 19 new Dodge Chargers for the police department. He did not say when they will be delivered.

If police officers are expected to hand out tickets to motorists for problems with their vehicles, then the police department must make sure its own vehicles are road-legal, Medina said.

In addition to the inspection problem, Medina said, Santiago also recently noted several other "deficiencies" at the repair garage and has ordered Lt. Donald Fillinger review the garage's staffing, equipment and policies.

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