

The Myths of Baja SAE Technical Inspection

The objective of the National Technical Inspection team is to ensure that all cars which enter the event comply with the guidelines and rules. We try to ensure that all teams are treated fairly and that we maintain a level playing field for everyone. Our goal is to inspect all cars at least once that were prepared for technical inspection at 9:00 am on Day 2. At the event, our team is responsible for all technical inspection, scoring, cost event, managing the endurance event start and black flagging. Prior to the event the team answers all Technical Inspection Questions submitted to <http://www.bajasae.net/>, reviews the Frame Documentations, and supports the Baja SAE Rules committee with Technical Input/ suggestions to clarify rules questions or concerns.

Our team is comprised of over 90% volunteers from various countries and companies, these volunteers use their own personal time and resources to participate as Technical Inspectors. More than 98% of the Techs competed in the Baja events as students. We require that all Techs attend at least two events a year to improve consistency and currently we have 40 active Technical Inspectors. Every Technical inspector is required to complete online testing each year to understand the rule changes and participates in a mentoring program for the first 2-3 years. We try to bring on 3-5 new Techs each year to ensure we have a diverse team.

Myths:

1. You cannot pass Tech Inspection on the first try, Techs will always find something to ensure you do not pass.

False. Teams that are prepared, ask questions during the year on items that they are not clear on, review their car before arriving at Tech using the provided check list, have all their drivers present, and have all the required paperwork filled out correctly will be the teams that pass. It is much faster for Techs when a team is prepared than when we find items that are not in compliance. It takes about 30 minutes to pass a well-prepared team and for a team that is not prepared it can take more than an hour. A team's experience or level of financial support does not affect passing on the first try. First year teams who are prepared have passed technical inspection on the first try.

2. Tech Inspection doesn't have a recheck line and if they did then it would be faster.

False. If we dedicated resources and created a separate line it might be faster for the few teams that are rechecked but it would slow down the overall process and reduce the number of first time teams that get through on Day 1. Teams would still stand in line waiting for a recheck and resources would be spread thinner. Currently the first 70-80 teams that are ready for Tech Inspection on Day 1 in the morning will be seen prior to 3pm. After 3pm, the line is 90% rechecks and we do separate the rechecks and first-time cars to best utilize resources. This allows us to keep a single numbering system in place for both days; the second day for all the rechecks and any of the first time through teams that waited to the end of the day to get a number.

2. Techs will allow some teams to cut the line and come in the back of the tent to go through Tech Inspection.

True. In some situations, a Technical Inspector might miss an item on a car and it is found in Final Tech - we consider that our fault. When we make a mistake we still require the team to address the issue but we do not make them get back in line for Tech Inspection. They may return to Final Tech directly when the fix has been implemented.

3. Techs make up rules to fail teams.

False. Sometimes rules require interpretation and once we make an interpretation for one car we apply it equally to all teams. Design and innovation in Baja SAE is constantly evolving, and we do our best to evaluate every vehicle against the rules and requirements of the competition.

4. Techs find things at one event that were not found at a previous event.

True. As stated above we have all levels of volunteers and we are not 100% perfect at inspecting every car, but if we find something later, we cannot say it passes because it was missed at the last event. Our only motivation is to ensure the safety of the event, the students, volunteers, spectators and to treat all teams fairly and equally.

5. All techs work for Honda.

False. Honda sponsors technical inspection by helping with a portion of the costs associated with staffing and running the event. At each event Honda sends 3-5 Honda employees to volunteer as techs, but the other 20-25 techs have no affiliation with Honda.