Tractor-Trailer Crash Statistics: FMCSA and NHTSA Figures

National crash data shows how often large trucks are involved in serious crashes. The figures below come from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and each one is tied to its data year. A truck accident attorney may cite figures like these for background, but statistics describe patterns across many crashes, not what happened in a single one.

Deaths in crashes involving large trucks

NHTSA told Congress in a June 2024 report that 5,936 people died in crashes involving large trucks in 2022, an increase of 2 percent from the previous year. Of those deaths, 1,097 were occupants of large trucks and 672 were nonoccupants such as pedestrians and bicyclists. FMCSA's Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2022 reports that 82 percent of the people killed in fatal crashes involving large trucks were not occupants of the large truck. In other words, most of the people who die in these crashes are outside the truck. Truck drivers themselves are among the injured as well, and a truck accident attorney may represent a driver hurt by another party's negligence.

FMCSA's 2024 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics reports that of the 39,221 fatal crashes on the nation's roads in 2022, 5,476, or 14.0 percent, involved at least one large truck or bus. The guide also counts 14,333,821 registered large trucks in 2022 and reports that large trucks traveled 331.3 billion miles that year, which was 10.4 percent of all vehicle miles traveled.

Where and when fatal truck crashes happen

According to FMCSA's Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2022, of roughly 503,000 police-reported crashes involving large trucks in 2022, 5,279 were fatal crashes and 114,000 were injury crashes. Approximately 54 percent of fatal crashes involving large trucks occurred in rural areas and 27 percent on Interstate highways. It also reports that 39 percent of fatal large truck crashes occurred at night, between 6:00 pm and 6:00 am, and that 62 percent involved two vehicles. Large trucks were also involved in 29 percent of work zone fatal crashes. A truck accident attorney looking at a nighttime crash on a rural road will often look at lighting and speed along with the driver's duty-status records.

Driver factors and crash causes

That report also states that at least one driver-related factor was recorded for 33 percent of large truck drivers in fatal crashes, compared with 54 percent of passenger vehicle drivers in fatal crashes. Speeding of any kind was the most frequent driver-related factor for drivers of both vehicle types. The report also notes that the critical precrash event for 63 percent of large trucks in fatal crashes was another vehicle, person, animal or object in the truck's lane or encroaching into it.

Those figures need careful reading. FMCSA cautions that FARS, CRSS and MCMIS describe the ***atlanta truck crash*** events and details of crashes but do not include data on crash causation or fault. A coded factor is not a finding of legal fault, which is why a semi-truck accident attorney relies on evidence from the specific crash instead of national averages.

Truck occupants and wider trends

FMCSA reports 1,097 large truck occupant fatalities in 2022, up 9 percent from 1,011 in 2021. For all vehicle types, NHTSA reported that 39,254 people died in traffic crashes in 2024, and its early estimate for 2025 was 36,640 deaths. Annual figures are revised as data is finalized, so the newest numbers can change.

Statistics versus an individual case

National figures can show why trucking safety rules exist, but each claim turns on its own facts: the crash report, the ELD and ECM data, the driver qualification file and witness accounts. An 18-wheeler accident attorney will focus on that evidence. This is general information, not legal advice, and statistics cannot predict the result of any claim.