What FMCSA and NHTSA Data Show About Truck Accidents

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 lawyer might use figures like these for context, but statistics describe patterns across many crashes rather than what happened in any one of them.

How many people die in large truck crashes

In a June 2024 report to Congress, NHTSA stated 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. Most of the people who die in these crashes, in other words, 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, or 10.4 percent of all vehicle miles traveled.

When and where fatal truck crashes occur

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. The report adds 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. At least one large truck was 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-related factors

The same report 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 both truck accident lawyer groups of drivers. 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 notes that FARS, CRSS and MCMIS describe the 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, truckaccidentlawyer.wiki which is why a semi-truck accident attorney relies on evidence from the specific crash rather than 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.

What statistics mean for an individual claim

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 article is general information and not legal advice, and no statistic can predict the result of any claim.