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 is labeled with its 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.

How many people die in large truck crashes

In a June 2024 report to Congress, NHTSA stated that 5,936 people died *18 wheeler accident attorney Atlanta* in crashes involving large trucks in 2022, up 2 percent from the year before. Among them, 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 lawyer may represent a truck driver hurt by someone else'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 same guide 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

As reported in 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 often checks lighting and speed along with the driver's duty-status records.

What the data says about driver factors

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 both groups of drivers. For 63 percent of large trucks in fatal crashes, the report notes, the critical precrash event was another vehicle, person, animal or object in the truck's lane or moving 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 legal finding of fault, so a truck crash attorney relies on evidence from the specific crash rather than national averages.

Trends for truck occupants and all road users

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 focuses on that evidence. This is general information, not legal advice, and statistics cannot predict the result of any claim.