

# Fatalities and Injuries Among Truck and Taxicab Drivers

BY ANDREW T. KNESTAUT

Taxicab drivers transport thousands of people every day, and truckdrivers move much of the goods we buy and sell. Business and daily life would be difficult without them.

Workers who drive for a living must deal with bad roads, traffic jams, and long hours. Truckdrivers and taxicab drivers face the possibility of serious injury and death from highway traffic incidents and assaults. Between 1992-95, almost 3,000 truckdrivers, and more than 400 taxicab drivers lost their lives while working.

From 1992-95, truckdriving had the most fatalities<sup>1</sup> of all occupations, accounting for 12 percent of all worker deaths. About two-thirds of the fatally injured truckers were involved in highway crashes. Truckdrivers also had more nonfatal injuries (over 151,000) than workers in any other occupation in 1995<sup>2</sup>. Half of the nonfatal injuries were serious sprains and strains; this may be attributed to the fact that many truckdrivers must unload the goods they transport. (Tables 1 and 2 show other characteristics of truckdriver fatalities and nonfatal injuries.<sup>3</sup>)

Deadly assaults claim the lives of more taxicab drivers than any other fatal events. From 1992-95, over three-quarters of fatally injured cabdrivers were victims of homicide. In contrast, just one-tenth of the fatally injured drivers were involved in vehicle collisions. Taxicab drivers had relatively few nonfatal injuries—about 1,300 in 1995; only 3 percent were due to nonfatal assaults. These figures suggest that cabdrivers would have relatively safe jobs if deadly violence did not affect their work environments. (Tables 2 and 3 show other characteristics of taxicab driver fatalities and nonfatal injuries.)

## Taxicab driver homicides

Cabdrivers had the highest homicide rate—32 homicides per 100,000—among the occupations most affected by

deadly violence. This rate is four times more than that of police officers. Robbery appeared to be the motive in many cases. About half of the murders occurred between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. Half of the murdered taxicab drivers had head injuries, most from gunfire. Table 4 shows the occupations with the highest rates of homicide.

All workers in occupations listed in table 4 are affected in some manner by theft. Several factors help to explain why taxicab drivers are frequent victims of this crime: They work alone, frequently at night, and handle cash. In addition, taxicab drivers tend to work in areas, such as inner cities, with higher crime rates.

High crime areas also have higher incidences of violent crime, which may explain why taxicab drivers are not only robbed, but murdered as well. For example, all 35 cab drivers fatally injured in the Bronx, New York, between 1992-95 were victims of homicide. As noted above, cabdrivers had few nonfatal injuries, and very few of these were due to assaults. This suggests two situational extremes when cabdrivers were robbed or assaulted: (1) Drivers were not physically harmed, or (2) drivers were fatally injured. Further analysis of the factors behind these deadly assaults is not within the scope of this study because they are linked to the prevalence of violent crime in general.

Deadly violence affected cabdrivers in a variety of situations. In some instances, taxicab drivers were robbed and killed after responding to "setup" requests for taxis. Several cabdrivers were killed during disputes with customers, or when minor traffic incidents incited the persons involved to commit acts of violence. Still other drivers were killed by gunfire exchanged between other persons.

## Injuries and fatalities of truckdrivers

Several factors contribute to fatal highway crashes of truckdrivers, including: Type of truck driven, vehicle maintenance, and weather conditions. Two-thirds of the truckdrivers fatally injured in highway crashes were behind

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the wheel of a tractor-trailer truck. Brake failure was reported as a factor in about two dozen of the incidents, and bad weather was involved in another dozen.

Driver fatigue may be another cause of highway crashes involving truckdrivers. Driving can be an exhausting activity, especially in heavy traffic or bad weather. A third of the fatal highway incidents occurred between 12 a.m. and 8 a.m., when the need for rest may be greatest. But almost half occurred during standard work hours, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Asleep at the wheel" is mentioned as a suspected factor in only 4 percent of the trucker highway fatality cases. It may be, however, that fatigue is a factor in more crashes, but it is neither suspected, nor recorded in some instances.

Although it may be expected that more fatal collisions between trucks and trains occur at night, just under three-quarters of the 94 collisions occurred during daytime hours, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (See table 1.) Over 200 truckdrivers were fatally struck by vehicles while out of their trucks; half of these occurred during hours of twilight or darkness, 4 p.m. to 8 a.m. Yet, almost half were fatally struck during the day. Table 5 shows the activities of dismounted truckdrivers when they were struck by vehicles and fatally injured.

As noted in table 2, half of the nonfatal truckdriver injuries in 1995 were serious sprains and strains, which again

may be related to the fact truckdrivers often unload their own truck. The sprains and strains were likely the result of overexertion during unloading, and when drivers were struck by the objects they were moving. The back was the part of body affected in over a quarter of the truck drivers' nonfatal injury cases.

An underlying factor explaining these injuries may be the sedentary nature of truckdriving. Truckdrivers spend many hours behind a steering wheel. Tight delivery schedules may mean drivers have little time to waste at delivery sites, so they move heavy items immediately upon arrival to save time. Strenuous activity after hours of sitting, without time to stretch stiff muscles, may help explain why drivers sustain these injuries.

In addition, some truckdrivers may not be aware of proper lifting techniques, or the benefits of wearing back support gear. Some drivers may be provided with lifting equipment, but need additional or improved training in the proper use of it. Doubtless, however, despite the use of proper lifting techniques and equipment, injuries will still occur.

Truckdrivers and taxicab drivers make significant contributions to the national economy. Almost 3 million persons worked as truckdrivers, and over 200,000 persons drove taxicabs in 1995.

#### —ENDNOTES—

<sup>1</sup> The fatal work injury data were compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI). This program, which has collected occupational fatality data nationwide since 1992, uses diverse data sources to identify, verify, and profile fatal work injuries. Information about each workplace fatality (occupation and other worker characteristics, equipment being used, and circumstances of the event) is obtained by cross-referencing source documents, such as death certificates, workers' compensation records, and reports to Federal and State agencies. This method assures counts are as complete and accurate as possible.

<sup>2</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Survey of Occupational Injuries and

Illnesses (SOII) produced the nonfatal injury estimates. This program collects information from a random sample of about 250,000 establishments representing most of private industry. Worker characteristics are collected only for those workers sustaining injuries and illnesses requiring days away from work to recuperate.

<sup>3</sup> Comparison of fatal and nonfatal data is problematic, because the scope and methodology of CFOI and SOII are different. CFOI fatality data presented in this study are for 1992-95, and SOII nonfatal injury data are for 1995. For more information on CFOI or SOII, access the Internet at [www.bls.gov/oshhome.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oshhome.htm), or email [cfoistaff@bls.gov](mailto:cfoistaff@bls.gov)

**Table 1. Job-related fatalities of truck drivers by selected characteristics, 1992-95**

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Total .....	2,953	100	Total .....	2,953	100
<b>Year</b>			<b>Time of incident</b>		
1992 .....	699	24	12am-3:59am .....	311	11
1993 .....	739	25	4am-7:59am .....	486	16
1994 .....	766	26	8am-11:59am .....	708	24
1995 .....	749	25	12pm-3:59pm .....	710	24
<b>Employee status</b>			4pm-7:59pm .....	363	12
Wage and salary workers .....	2,696	91	8pm-12am .....	240	8
Self-employed .....	257	9	Unspecified .....	135	5
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Industry</b>		
Men .....	2,870	97	Private industry .....	2,908	98
Women .....	83	3	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing .....	56	2
<b>Age<sup>1</sup></b>			Mining .....	68	2
16 to 19 years .....	36	1	Oil and gas extraction .....	37	1
20 to 24 years .....	168	6	Construction .....	152	5
25 to 34 years .....	674	23	Heavy construction, except building .....	73	2
35 to 44 years .....	802	27	Highway and street construction .....	48	2
45 to 54 years .....	711	24	Special trade contractors .....	60	2
55 to 64 years .....	436	15	Manufacturing .....	281	10
65 years and over .....	122	4	Food and kindred products .....	55	2
<b>Race</b>			Lumber and wood products .....	86	3
White .....	2,489	84	Logging .....	57	2
Black .....	342	12	Stone, clay, and glass products .....	53	2
Asian or Pacific Islander .....	23	1	Concrete, gypsum, and plaster products .....	45	2
Other or unspecified .....	99	3	Transportation and public utilities .....	1,721	58
<b>Hispanic origin</b>			Trucking and warehousing .....	1,628	55
Hispanic .....	218	7	Trucking and courier services, except air .....	1,555	53
<b>Event or exposure</b>			Local trucking without storage .....	351	12
Contact with objects and equipment .....	251	8	Trucking, except local .....	891	30
Struck by object .....	156	5	Wholesale trade .....	243	8
Caught in or compressed by equipment or objects ..	75	3	Wholesale trade, durable goods .....	97	3
Falls .....	72	2	Wholesale trade, nondurable goods .....	145	5
Fall from nonmoving vehicle .....	31	1	Groceries and related products .....	59	2
Exposure to harmful substances or environments .....	93	3	Petroleum and petroleum products .....	42	1
Contact with overhead power lines .....	43	1	Retail trade .....	177	6
Transportation incidents .....	2,361	80	Eating and drinking places .....	41	1
Highway incident .....	1,893	64	Services .....	155	5
Collision between vehicles, mobile equipment .....	692	23	Business services .....	73	2
Moving in same direction .....	166	6	Auto repair, services, and parking .....	59	2
Moving in opposite directions, oncoming .....	231	8	Automotive services, except repair .....	45	2
Moving in intersection .....	78	3	Other or unspecified .....	55	2
Moving/standing vehicle, equipment—			Government .....	45	2
in roadway .....	49	2	<b>State<sup>2</sup> and county</b>		
Vehicle struck object or equipment in roadway ..	52	2	California .....	325	11
Vehicle struck object, equipment on side of road ..	389	13	Los Angeles .....	60	2
Noncollision incident .....	670	23	San Bernardino .....	40	1
Jack-knifed or overturned—no collision .....	498	17	Texas .....	261	9
Ran off highway—no collision .....	130	4	Florida .....	148	5
Nonhighway incident, except rail, air, water .....	120	4	Pennsylvania .....	120	4
Overturned .....	46	2	Georgia .....	119	4
Worker struck by vehicle, mobile equipment .....	234	8	North Carolina .....	107	4
Worker struck by vehicle, equipment in roadway ..	69	2	Ohio .....	106	4
Worker struck by vehicle, equip. on side of road ..	62	2	Mississippi .....	96	3
Worker struck in parking lot or non-road area .....	91	3	Indiana .....	94	3
Railway incident .....	94	3	Illinois .....	88	3
Fires and explosions .....	30	1	Alabama .....	82	3
Assaults and violent acts .....	126	4	Virginia .....	73	2
Homicides .....	96	3	Tennessee .....	67	2
Suicides .....	30	1	Arkansas .....	65	2
Other or unspecified .....	20	1	Kentucky .....	61	2
			Missouri .....	61	2
			Michigan .....	60	2
			Oregon .....	59	2
			Louisiana .....	57	2
			New Jersey .....	57	2
			Wisconsin .....	56	2
			Washington .....	55	2
			New York .....	54	2
			Oklahoma .....	54	2
			Other states .....	628	21

<sup>1</sup> Ages for four of the fatally injured truck drivers were not determined.

<sup>2</sup> States with more than 50 truck driver fatalities.

NOTE: Totals for major categories may include subcategories not shown separately. Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1992-95

**Table 2. Job-related nonfatal injuries and illnesses involving days away from work of truck and taxicab drivers by selected characteristics, 1995**

Characteristic	Truck drivers		Taxicab drivers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total .....	151,338	100	1,328	100
<b>Nature</b>				
Sprains, strains .....	78,360	52	795	60
Fractures .....	11,017	7	63	5
Cuts, punctures .....	7,035	5	—	—
Bruises .....	14,499	10	132	10
Multiple traumatic injuries and disorders .....	6,914	5	14	1
Back pain and pain, except back .....	9,829	6	41	3
Back pain, hurt back only .....	4,013	3	16	1
All other natures .....	23,684	16	283	21
<b>Part of body</b>				
Head .....	7,886	5	57	4
Eyes .....	2,559	2	—	—
Neck .....	5,128	3	89	7
Trunk .....	63,409	42	446	34
Back .....	42,102	28	322	24
Shoulder .....	8,962	6	83	6
Upper extremities .....	19,718	13	183	14
Finger .....	5,695	4	15	1
Hand .....	3,107	2	37	3
Wrist .....	3,480	2	62	5
Lower extremities .....	37,331	25	255	19
Knee .....	14,003	9	57	4
Foot, toe .....	6,919	5	37	3
Multiple body parts .....	16,035	11	238	18
All other body parts .....	1,831	1	60	5
<b>Event or exposure</b>				
Contact with objects and equipment .....	30,396	20	77	6
Struck against object .....	7,616	5	—	—
Struck by object .....	15,635	10	36	3
Caught in or compressed by equipment or objects .....	4,412	3	—	—
Fall to lower level .....	13,791	9	74	6
Fall on same level .....	15,564	10	75	6
Slips or trips without fall .....	5,979	4	—	—
Overexertion .....	43,605	29	443	33
Overexertion in lifting .....	26,232	17	279	21
Repetitive motion .....	1,059	1	—	—
Exposure to harmful substances or environments .....	1,706	1	16	1
Transportation incidents .....	18,474	12	522	39
Assaults and violent acts by persons .....	—	—	36	3
All other events .....	20,764	13	85	6
<b>Age</b>				
16 to 19 years .....	1,064	1	—	—
20 to 24 years .....	11,046	7	45	3
25 to 34 years .....	47,953	32	370	28
35 to 44 years .....	46,479	31	442	33
45 to 54 years .....	30,281	20	315	24
55 to 64 years .....	11,379	8	100	8
65 years and over .....	1,070	1	39	3
Not reported .....	2,066	1	17	1
<b>Race / Hispanic origin</b>				
White .....	88,438	58	582	44
Black .....	14,438	10	150	11
Other race or not reported .....	38,608	26	465	35
Hispanic .....	9,854	7	131	10
<b>Gender</b>				
Men .....	141,101	93	1,104	83
Women .....	9,657	6	225	17

NOTE: Dashes indicate less than .05 percent or data that do not meet publication guidelines. Totals for major categories may include subcategories not shown separately. Figures may

not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 1995

**Table 3. Job-related fatalities of taxicab drivers by selected characteristics, 1992-95**

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Total .....	431	100	Total .....	431	100
<b>Year</b>			<b>Time of incident</b>		
1992 .....	106	25	12am-3:59am .....	92	21
1993 .....	113	26	4am-7:59am .....	58	13
1994 .....	113	26	8am-11:59am .....	31	7
1995 .....	99	23	12pm-3:59pm .....	38	9
			4pm-7:59pm .....	41	10
			8pm-12am .....	91	21
			Unspecified .....	80	19
<b>Employee status</b>					
Wage and salary workers .....	350	81			
Self-employed .....	81	19			
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Location</b>		
Men .....	413	96	Home .....	6	1
Women .....	18	4	Street and highway .....	355	82
			Interstate, freeway, or expressway .....	19	4
			Other state or U.S. highway .....	9	2
			Local road or street .....	123	29
			Public building .....	6	1
			Other or unspecified .....	64	15
			Parking lot, garage (except employer's premises) .....	24	6
<b>Age</b>					
18 to 24 years .....	14	3			
25 to 34 years .....	116	27			
35 to 44 years .....	160	37			
45 to 54 years .....	82	19			
55 to 64 years .....	28	6			
65 years and over .....	31	7			
<b>Race</b>			<b>State<sup>1</sup> and area</b>		
White .....	203	47	New York .....	141	33
Black .....	157	36	Kings .....	38	9
Asian or Pacific Islander .....	34	8	Bronx .....	35	8
Other or unspecified .....	37	9	Queens .....	30	7
			New York .....	23	5
<b>Hispanic origin</b>			Florida .....	34	8
Hispanic .....	58	13	Dade .....	7	2
			Palm Beach .....	5	1
			Marin .....	4	1
<b>Event or exposure</b>			California .....	27	6
Contact with objects and equipment .....	6	1	Los Angeles .....	10	2
Struck by object .....	4	1	San Francisco .....	4	1
Transportation incidents .....	78	18	Georgia .....	21	5
Highway incident .....	63	15	Fulton .....	7	2
Collision between vehicles, mobile equipment .....	44	10	DeKalb .....	6	1
Moving in same direction .....	8	2	Texas .....	21	5
Moving in opposite directions, oncoming .....	10	2	Harris .....	7	2
Moving in intersection .....	6	1	Illinois .....	13	3
Moving/standing vehicle, equip.—in roadway .....	7	2	Cook .....	11	3
Vehicle struck object, equipment on side of road .....	9	2	New Jersey .....	13	3
Noncollision incident .....	4	1	Essex .....	6	1
Jack-knifed or overturned—no collision .....	4	1	North Carolina .....	13	3
Nonhighway incident, except rail, air, water .....	4	1	Pennsylvania .....	13	3
Worker struck by vehicle, mobile equipment .....	11	3	Philadelphia .....	4	1
Worker struck by vehicle, equipment in roadway .....	6	1	Arizona .....	11	3
Worker struck by vehicle, equip. on side of road .....	5	1	Maricopa .....	9	2
Assaults and violent acts .....	342	79	Maryland .....	11	3
Homicides .....	338	78	Prince George's .....	5	1
Hitting, kicking, beating .....	11	3	Indiana .....	10	2
Shooting .....	301	70	Marion .....	6	1
Stabbing .....	17	4	Michigan .....	10	2
Other events or exposures .....	5	1	Other states .....	93	22

<sup>1</sup> States with 10 or more job-related taxicab driver fatalities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1992-95

NOTE: Totals for major categories may include subcategories not shown separately. Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding.

**Table 4. Occupations with the highest rates<sup>1</sup> of job-related homicide, 1995**

Occupation	Number of fatalities		Employed (000s)	Homicides per 100,000 workers
	Total	Homicides		
Total .....	6,210	1,024	126,248	1
Taxicab drivers .....	99	69	213	32
Policemen .....	174	81	1,051	8
Security guards .....	101	59	899	7
Food and lodging managers .....	58	46	1,276	4
Cashiers .....	116	107	2,727	4
Sales supervisors, proprietors .....	212	133	4,480	3

<sup>1</sup> The rate of job-related homicide per 100,000 workers was calculated as follows:

$(N/W) \times 100,000$ ; N = the number of job-related homicide victims, 16 years of age and older; W = the number of employed workers. The employed worker figures used in

the rate calculations were annual average estimates of employed civilians, 16 years of age and older, from the Current Population Survey, 1995. These employment-based rates measure the incidence of job-related homicide for all workers in an occupation regardless of exposure time.

**Table 5. Activity of dismantled truck drivers when struck by vehicle, 1992-95**

Activity	Number	Percent
Total .....	234	100
Truck transport operations .....	117	50
Entering, exiting truck .....	14	6
Directing, flagging traffic .....	14	6
Walking near truck .....	68	29
Crossing street .....	16	7
Walking behind truck .....	16	7
Truck maintenance .....	23	10
Loading, unloading truck .....	19	8
Other activity .....	59	25
Unspecified activity .....	16	7

NOTE: Totals for major categories may include subcategories not shown separately.