

# 2003 Large Truck Crash Overview



**Analysis Division  
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation**

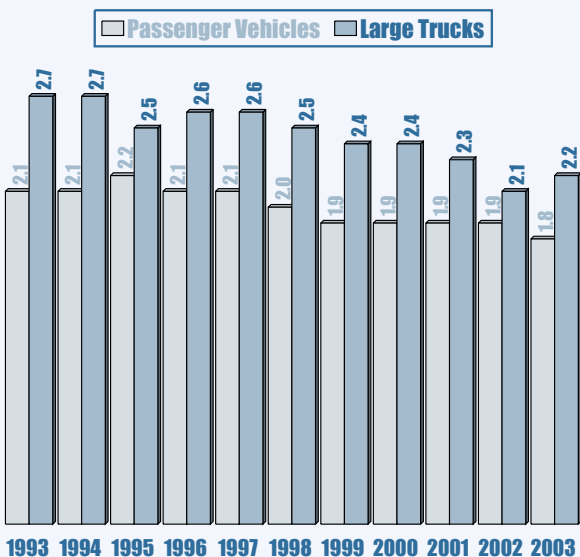
# 2003 Large Truck Crash Overview

The mission of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is to promote the safe operation of commercial vehicles on our Nation's highways. Of all the people killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2003, 12% (4,986) died in crashes that involved a large truck. Another 122,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks. Only about 15% of those killed and 22% of those injured were occupants of large trucks.

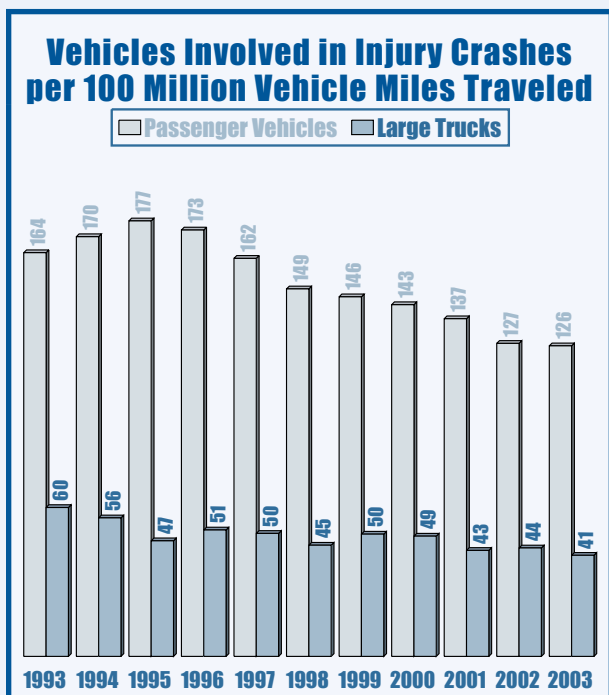
## Trends

► **Fatal Crashes.** From 1993 to 2003, the number of large trucks involved in fatal crashes increased from 4,328 to 4,669—up 8%. The number of large trucks in fatal crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled declined in these years from 2.7 to 2.2—down 19%. The same rate for passenger vehicles fell from 2.1 to 1.8—down 14%.

### Vehicles Involved in Fatal Crashes per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled



- **Injury Crashes.** From 1993 to 2003, the number of large trucks involved in injury crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled declined by 32%, while the rate for passenger vehicles dropped by 23%.



## Vehicles

- In 2003, large trucks drove 7% of all vehicle miles traveled and made up 3% of all registered vehicles in the United States. In motor vehicle crashes, large trucks represented:
  - 8% of vehicles in fatal crashes
  - 3% of vehicles in injury crashes
  - 5% of vehicles in property-damage-only crashes.
- Truck tractors pulling semi-trailers accounted for 64% of the trucks involved in fatal crashes and about 50% of the trucks involved in nonfatal crashes.

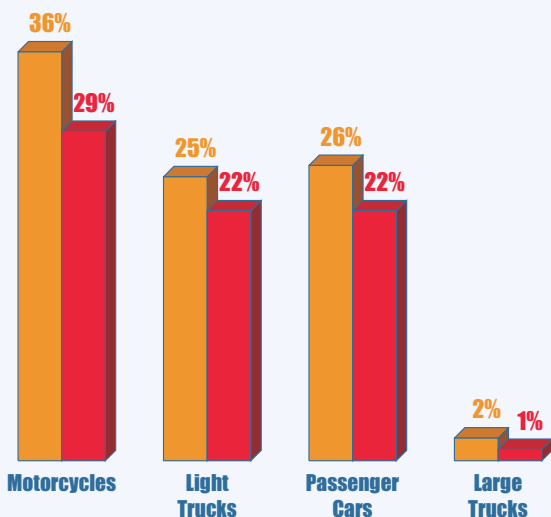
- ▶ Doubles (truck tractors pulling a semi-trailer and a full trailer) were only 3% of trucks involved in both fatal and nonfatal crashes, and triples (tractors pulling three trailers) accounted for less than 0.5% of all trucks involved.
- ▶ Only 4% of trucks involved in fatal crashes and 2% of trucks involved in nonfatal crashes were carrying hazardous materials (HM). HM was released from the cargo compartment in 13% of these crashes.

## Drivers

- ▶ Only 1% of the drivers of large trucks involved in fatal crashes in 2003 were legally intoxicated (blood alcohol content of 0.08 grams per deciliter or higher), as compared with 22% of both passenger car drivers and light truck drivers in fatal crashes. Only 2% of the drivers of large trucks involved in fatal crashes had any alcohol in their bloodstream.

### Percentage of Driver Alcohol Use in Fatal Crashes, 2003

■ Involvement (BAC  $\geq$  0.01)
 ■ Intoxicated (BAC  $\geq$  0.08)



- ▶ Seventy-seven percent of the drivers of large trucks involved in fatal crashes were reported by police as wearing their safety belts, compared with 59% of passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes.
- ▶ In fatal crashes involving large trucks, crash-related factors were cited for 41% of the truck drivers. In comparison, crash-related factors were noted for 68% of passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes. Some of the most common factors cited for drivers of large trucks and drivers of passenger vehicles were the same: driving too fast, running off the road or out of the traffic lane, and failure to yield the right of way.

## **Crash Environment**

- ▶ Speeding (exceeding the speed limit or driving too fast for conditions) was a factor in 22% of the fatal crashes involving a large truck, compared with 31% of all fatal crashes. Twenty-one percent of injury crashes involving a large truck and 24% of all injury crashes were speed related.
- ▶ No adverse weather conditions were reported for 85% of the fatal crashes and for 87% of the nonfatal crashes involving large trucks in 2003. Rain was the most common adverse weather condition.
- ▶ Two-thirds (66%) of the fatal crashes involving large trucks—and nearly four-fifths (77%) of the nonfatal crashes—occurred during the day.
- ▶ The vast majority of the fatal crashes involving large trucks (84%) and of the nonfatal crashes (86%) occurred on Monday through Friday.
- ▶ For 77% of the fatal crashes and for 68% of the nonfatal crashes involving large trucks, the first harmful event was a collision with another vehicle in transport.

- ▶ Rollover was the first harmful event for only 4% of the fatal crashes and only 2% of the nonfatal crashes involving large trucks.
- ▶ More than one-fifth (21%) of fatal crashes that took place in work zones—areas of construction, maintenance, or utility activity—involved a large truck.

## Definitions

**Large Trucks:** Trucks over 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR).

**Passenger Vehicles:** Passenger cars and light trucks—such as vans, sport utility vehicles, and pickup trucks—with 10,000 pounds GVWR or less.

## Data Sources

**Fatal Crash Data:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS).

**Nonfatal Crash Data:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, General Estimates System (GES); and FMCSA, Motor Carrier Management Information System (MCMIS) crash file.

**Vehicle Miles Traveled:** Federal Highway Administration.

**For more information, contact the Analysis Division at (202) 366-1861, or visit our web sites at [www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov) and [ai.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov).**