



In 2018, 4,951 people were killed in crashes involving large trucks.<sup>1</sup> This is the fourth year to year increase in a row and a combined increase of 46 percent since 2009 when such fatalities were at their lowest reported level.<sup>2</sup> The number of fatalities in 2018 is also the highest since 2007.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, 148,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks in 2017, the latest year for which statistics are available.<sup>4</sup>

### LARGE TRUCK SAFETY FACTS

- Annual truck crash fatalities are equivalent to a major airplane crash every other week of the year.
- The cost to society from crashes involving commercial motor vehicles was estimated to be \$134 billion in 2016.<sup>5</sup>
- A January 2015 nationwide survey conducted by Harper Polling found that 76 percent of respondents oppose longer and heavier trucks.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, a May 2013 public opinion poll by Lake Research Partners found that 68 percent of Americans oppose heavier trucks and 88 percent of Americans do not want to pay higher taxes for the damage caused by heavier trucks.<sup>7</sup>
- Tractor-trailers moving at 60 mph are required to stop in 310 feet – the length of a football field – once the brakes are applied.<sup>8</sup> Actual stopping distances are often much longer due to driver response time before braking and the common problem that truck brakes are often not in top working condition.
  - In 2016, violations related to tires and/or brakes accounted for 10 of the top 20 most common vehicle out-of-service (OOS) violations.<sup>9</sup>
- More than one in every five trucks that is inspected is placed out of service for vehicle deficiencies that prevent it from continuing to operate.<sup>10</sup>
- In fatal two-vehicle crashes between a large truck and a passenger motor vehicle, 96 percent of the fatalities were occupants of the passenger vehicle.<sup>11</sup>
- Overweight trucks disproportionately damage our badly deteriorated roads and bridges. An 18,000 pound truck axle does over 3,000 times more damage to pavement than a typical passenger vehicle axle.<sup>12</sup>
- The Nation's roads continue to receive a grade of "D" from the American Society of Civil Engineers which noted that 20 percent of the nation's highways alone had poor pavement conditions in 2014. This does not include those highways with mediocre conditions and all other non-highway roads.<sup>13</sup> In 2016, one in 11 of the Nation's nearly 615,000 bridges in the National Bridge Inventory were structurally deficient.<sup>14</sup> The Federal Highway Administration estimates that \$142 billion in capital investment would be needed on an annual basis over the next 20 years to significantly improve conditions and performance.<sup>15</sup>
- Increasing the weight of a heavy truck by only 10 percent increases bridge damage by 33 percent.<sup>16</sup> The FHWA estimated that the investment backlog for bridges, to address all cost-beneficial bridge needs, is \$123.1 billion. The U.S. would need to increase annual funding for bridges by 20 percent over current spending levels to eliminate the bridge backlog by 2032.<sup>17</sup>
- The U.S. taxpayer unfairly subsidizes bigger, heavier trucks:
  - According to the FHWA, a truck weighing over 80,000 pounds only pays between 40 and 50 percent of its cost responsibility.<sup>18</sup>
  - The 2007 Transportation for Tomorrow report, mandated by Congress, confirmed that heavy trucks were underpaying their fair share for highway use, that user fee fairness could be achieved through weight-distance taxes, that heavy trucks should pay an infrastructure damage fee, and

that the Heavy Vehicle Use Tax—which only contributes one billion dollars annually to the Highway Trust Fund—had not been changed since the early 1980s.<sup>19</sup>

- The nation’s deteriorating surface transportation infrastructure has severe effects on America’s economy. The American Society of Civil Engineers found the cost to the economy from the state of the surface transportation infrastructure will be approximately 877,000 jobs lost and suppressed GDP growth of \$897 billion by the year 2020. Further, the impact on each American family’s budget would be \$3,100 per year, based on lower earnings and higher spending.<sup>20</sup>
- Research and experience show that allowing bigger, heavier trucks will not result in fewer trucks:
  - Since 1982, when Congress last increased the gross vehicle weight limit, truck registrations have more than doubled.<sup>21</sup>
  - Increases in truck size and weights over more than 35 years have never resulted in fewer heavier trucks on the roads.<sup>22</sup>
- Heavy trucks account for 18 percent of our nation’s transportation energy use.<sup>23</sup>
- Trucks with heavier gross weights require larger engines that decrease fuel economy on a miles-per-gallon basis.<sup>24</sup>
- Technical reports released in June 2015 from the U.S. Department of Transportation Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study (DOT Study) concluded there is a “profound” lack of data from which to quantify the safety impact of larger or heavier trucks and consequently recommended that no changes in the relevant truck size and weight laws and regulations be considered until data limitations are overcome.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2018 Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes: Overview, NHTSA, Oct. 2019, DOT HS 812 826, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812826>

<sup>2</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2017 Large Trucks Data, NHTSA, DOT HS 812 663. (January 2019), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812663>

<sup>3</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2016 Large Trucks Data, NHTSA, Oct. 2019, DOT HS 812 497, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812497>

<sup>4</sup> Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2016, Trends Table 7, Large Truck Injury Crash Statistics, 1996-2016, available at: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety/data-and-statistics/large-truck-and-bus-crash-facts-2016>.

<sup>5</sup> 2017 Pocket Guide to large Truck and Bus Statistics, June 2017, Table 4-22, p. 46, FMCSA.

<sup>6</sup> Press Release: While Large Trucking Companies Lobby for Bigger Semitrailers, National Troopers Coalition Chair Points to Poll Showing Three of Four Americans Oppose Increases, Coalition Against Bigger Trucks, February 10, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Memo Re: Increasing the legal weight for trucks in the U.S., Lake Research Partners, May 7, 2013, available at <http://trucksafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/sts2013-lr-memo-tsc.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 49 Part 571 Section 121: Standard No. 121 Air brake systems (FMVSS 121).

<sup>9</sup> Roadside Inspections, Vehicle Violations: All Trucks Roadside Inspections, Vehicle Violations (2016 – Calendar), FMCSA, available at <http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/SafetyProgram/spViolation.aspx?rpt=RDVV>.

<sup>10</sup> Motor Carrier Safety Progress Report (as of 3/31/18), FMCSA.

<sup>11</sup> IIHS, Large Trucks, December 2019, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/large-trucks>

<sup>12</sup> Equivalent Single Axle Load, Pavement Interactive, Aug. 15, 2007, available at <http://www.pavementinteractive.org/equivalent-single-axle-load/>.

<sup>13</sup> 2017 Infrastructure Report Card – Roads, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), available at <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Roads-Final.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> 2017 Infrastructure Report Card – Bridges, ASCE, available at <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Bridges-Final.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> 2015 Status of the Nation’s Highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions and Performance, Chapter 8, FHWA 2016, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2015cpr/>.

<sup>16</sup> Effect of Truck Weight on Bridge network Costs, NCHRP Report 495, National Cooperative Highway Research Program, 2003, available at [http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_rpt\\_495.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_495.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> 2015 Status of the Nation’s Highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions and Performance, Chapter 7, p. 7-34, FHWA 2016, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2015cpr/>.

<sup>18</sup> 2000 Federal Highway User Fee Equity Ratios, Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report, FHWA, May 2000, available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/hcas/addendum.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, Transportation for Tomorrow, Dec. 2007, available at [http://transportationfortomorrow.com/final\\_report/pdf/final\\_report.pdf](http://transportationfortomorrow.com/final_report/pdf/final_report.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> American Society of Civil Engineers, “Failure to Act: The Economic Impact of Current Investment Trends in Surface Transportation Infrastructure,” January 2013, available at [http://www.asce.org/uploadedFiles/Infrastructure/Failure\\_to\\_Act/Failure\\_to\\_Act\\_Report.pdf](http://www.asce.org/uploadedFiles/Infrastructure/Failure_to_Act/Failure_to_Act_Report.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> 2015 Annual Report.

<sup>22</sup> Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, analysis of for-hire truck registrations in the Truck Inventory and Use Survey / Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey, FHWA data, and Maine-Vermont Pilot Program data.

<sup>23</sup> Transportation Energy Data Book: Edition 35, U.S. Department of Energy, Oct. 2016, available at [http://cta.ornl.gov/data/tebd35/Edition35\\_Full\\_Doc.pdf](http://cta.ornl.gov/data/tebd35/Edition35_Full_Doc.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Western Uniformity Scenario Analysis: A Regional Truck Size and Weight Scenario Requested by the Western Governors’ Association, Apr. 2004, available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/otps/truck/wusr/wusr.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study: DOT Transmittal letters to Congress, June 5, 2015.