

Highway Fatalities Among the Leading Causes of Workplace Deaths

BY JANICE WINDAU AND TRACY JACK

Highway fatalities accounted for 1 in every 5 of the 6,210 job-related deaths during 1995, and were the leading cause of fatal work injuries.¹ This article summarizes the characteristics of the 1,329 workers who were fatally injured in highway traffic incidents, the occupations and industries in which they worked, and the types of highway incidents responsible.

About half of the highway fatalities resulted from collisions between two or more vehicles. (See table 1.) One-fifth of the fatalities resulted from a crash with an object other than a vehicle, such as a tree, bridge abutment, or utility pole, and another fifth occurred when the vehicle jackknifed or overturned. Patterns varied somewhat according to the type of vehicle involved. Collisions with other vehicles, crashes with objects on the side of the road, and jackknifings and overturnings contributed about equally (roughly 30 percent) to the 359 deaths of those riding in tractor trailers. For workers killed while riding in other types of highway vehicles, collisions between vehicles accounted for slightly over half of the fatalities.

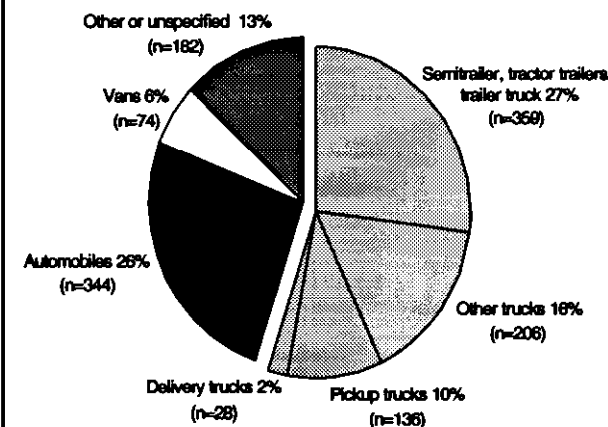
Trucks played a large role in the incidence of job-related highway fatalities. Over half of the highway fatality victims had been driving or riding in a truck at the time of the incident, half of which were tractor trailer rigs. (See chart 1.) And in one-fourth of the job-related highway fatalities, a truck collided with the vehicle in which the victim was riding.

Table 2 shows the role vehicles played in highway incidents. For example, there were 344 incidents in which the deceased was driving or riding in an automobile. However,

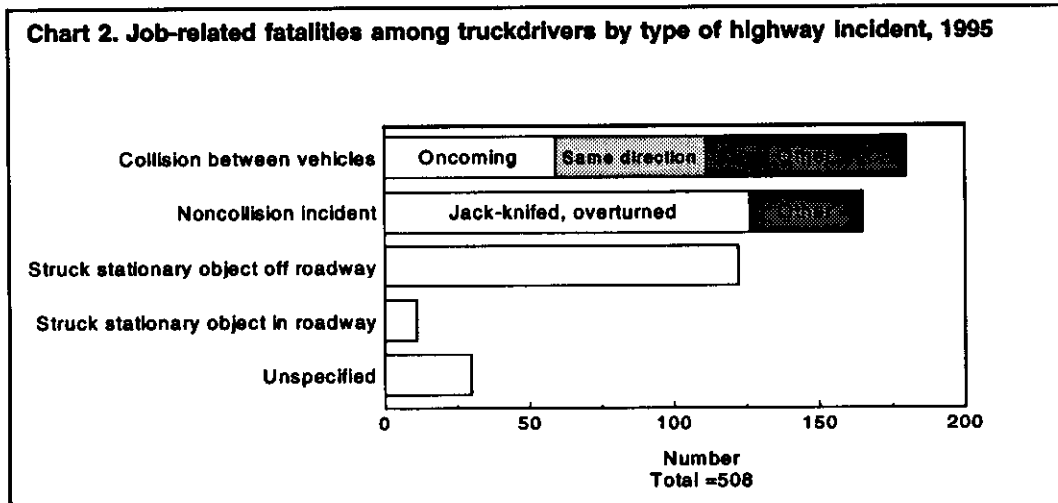
there were 162 incidents in which automobiles were identified as the vehicles with which the deceased's vehicle collided.

Fatalities by occupation and industry. About two-fifths of the decedents were truckdrivers; the rest worked in a variety of other occupations, including sales, farming, police, and executive and managerial jobs. (See table 3.) The manner in which truckdrivers were fatally injured in highway incidents is shown in chart 2. One-fourth of the workers fatally injured in highway incidents worked in the trucking and courier service industry. The remaining fatalities were widely dispersed among other industries. (See table 4.)

Chart 1. Types of vehicles in which highway fatality victims were riding, 1995



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Demographic characteristics. Workers who were killed were operating the vehicle 88 percent of the time; the remainder were passengers. About 90 percent of the victims of fatal highway incidents were men, and most of them were white. About 10 percent of the job-related highway fatalities were self-employed or working in the family business, compared with almost 20 percent of all victims of job-related fatalities. (See table 5.)

Background

The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, (CFOI), part of the BLS safety and health statistics program, provides the most complete count of fatal work injuries available. The census began in 1992 and is conducted in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. The BLS fatality census is a Federal/State cooperative venture in which costs are shared

equally.

CFOI uses diverse data sources to identify, verify, and profile fatal work injuries. Key information about each workplace fatality (occupation and other worker characteristics, equipment being used, circumstances of the event, etc.) is obtained by cross-referencing sources to assure annual job-related fatality counts are as complete and accurate as possible. These sources include death certificates and workers' compensation, police motor vehicle accident, and other reports compiled by various governmental agencies, as well as information from private sources.

For more information on these data or on the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, contact Janice Windau or Tracy Jack, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Safety, Health and Working Conditions, Room 3180, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20212. Telephone: (202) 606-6175; E-mail: Windau_J@bls.gov or Jack_T@bls.gov

Table 1. Job-related highway fatalities by event, 1995

Type of highway incident ¹	Number	Percent
Total	1,329	100
Collision between vehicles	634	48
Moving in opposite directions, oncoming	244	18
Moving in same direction	125	9
Moving in intersection	97	7
Moving and standing vehicle—in roadway	31	2
Moving and standing vehicle—side of road	13	1
Re-entrant collision	9	1
Noncollision incident	350	26
Jackknifed or overturned—no collision	260	20
Ran off highway—no collision	57	4
Vehicle struck object or equipment on side of road	249	19
Vehicle struck object or equipment in roadway	19	1

¹ Includes job-related fatalities that occurred on a public roadway, shoulder, or surrounding area. Excludes off-road (e.g., parking lot, farm, etc.), train, and pedestrian fatalities.

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

Table 2. Vehicles involved in highway fatalities, 1995

Source	Primary source ¹		Secondary source ²	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,329	100	1,329	100
Vehicles	1,309	98	653	49
Highway vehicle, motorized	1,271	96	644	48
Truck	729	55	361	27
Semitrailer, tractor trailer, trailer truck	359	27	185	14
Pickup truck	136	10	67	5
Delivery truck	28	2	4	-
Dump truck	19	1	18	1
Automobile	344	26	162	12
Van—passenger or light delivery	74	6	22	2
Bus	11	1	3	-
Motorcycle, moped	11	1	-	-
Highway vehicle, unspecified	89	7	92	7
Plant and industrial powered vehicles, tractors	31	2	3	-
Tractor	29	2	3	-
Machinery	20	2	3	-
Construction, logging, and mining machinery	9	1	-	-
Road grading and surfacing machinery	7	1	-	-

¹ Identifies the vehicle in which the fatally injured worker was an occupant.

deceased's vehicle collided. Secondary source was coded for 986 highway fatalities.

² Identifies the vehicle or other object with which the

Table 3. Job-related highway fatalities by occupation, 1995

Occupation ¹	Number	Percent
Total	1,329	100
Managerial and professional specialty occupations	172	13
Executive, administrative, managerial occupations	102	8
Professional specialty	70	5
Engineers	23	2
Technical, sales, and administrative support jobs	152	11
Sales occupations	94	7
Supervisors and proprietors, sales occupations	28	2
Sales representatives, commodities except retail	23	2
Sales workers, retail and personal services	31	2
Administrative support occupations, including clerical	34	3
Service occupations	107	8
Protective service occupations	69	5
Police and detectives	46	3
Service occupations, except protective and household	38	3
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations	84	6
Farm operators and managers	34	3
Farmers, except horticultural	24	2
Other agricultural and related occupations	45	3
Farm workers	28	2
Precision production, craft, and repair occupations	108	8
Mechanics and repairers	41	3
Vehicle, mobile equipment mechanics, repairers	20	2
Construction trades	49	4
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	663	50
Transportation and material moving occupations	580	44
Motor vehicle operators	559	42
Truckdrivers	508	38
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	72	5
Construction laborers	30	2
Laborers, except construction	28	2
Military	31	2
Other or unspecified	12	1

¹ Based on the 1990 Occupational Classification System developed by the Bureau of the Census.

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

Table 4. Job-related highway fatalities by industry, 1995

Industry ¹	Number	Percent
Total	1,329	100
Total, private	1,135	85
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	88	7
Agricultural production, crops	47	4
General farms, primarily crop	24	2
Agricultural services	21	2
Mining	27	2
Oil and gas extraction	20	2
Construction	120	9
Heavy construction, except building	35	3
Special trade contractors	64	5
Manufacturing	110	8
Lumber and wood products	27	2
Transportation and public utilities	377	28
Local and interurban passenger transit	27	2
Trucking and warehousing	312	23
Trucking and courier services, except air	300	23
Local trucking without storage	66	5
Trucking, except local	199	15
Wholesale trade	87	7
Wholesale trade, durable goods	44	3
Wholesale trade, nondurable goods	42	3
Groceries and related products	22	2
Retail trade	116	9
Automotive dealers and service stations	33	2
Eating and drinking places	21	2
Miscellaneous retail	30	2
Finance, insurance, and real estate	22	2
Services	166	12
Business services	51	4
Health services	23	2
Engineering and management services	22	2
Other or unspecified	22	2
Total government	194	15
Federal	49	4
State	45	3
Local	97	7

¹ *Standard Industrial Classification Manual, 1987.*

NOTE: Totals for major categories include subcategory

ies not shown separately. Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 5. Job-related fatalities by selected characteristics, 1995

Characteristics	Fatalities		Highway fatalities	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	6,210	100	1,329	100
Employee status				
Wage and salary workers	5,024	81	1,182	89
Self-employed ¹	1,186	19	147	11
Sex				
Men	5,676	91	1,197	90
Women	534	9	132	10
Age				
16 to 17 years	40	-	7	1
18 to 19 years	128	1	33	2
20 to 24 years	484	8	123	9
25 to 34 years	1,395	22	295	22
35 to 44 years	1,555	25	316	24
45 to 54 years	1,242	20	272	20
55 to 64 years	811	13	188	14
65 years and over	514	8	88	7
Other or unspecified	26	-	7	1
Race				
White	5,061	82	1,095	82
Black	689	11	146	11
Asian or Pacific Islander	161	3	10	1
Other or unspecified	299	4	78	6
Hispanic origin²				
Hispanic	610	10	114	9

¹ Includes paid and unpaid family workers, and may include owners of incorporated businesses, or members of partnerships.

² Hispanics may be of any race.

NOTE: Percentages may not add due to rounding. Dashes indicate no data reported or that data do not meet publication criteria.

—Endnote—

¹ For more information, see *National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1995* on pp. 34-45 of this issue.