

Priority One News

A Newsletter from Your Safety Partners at

 **DriverCheck**

Volume 3, Issue 4

April 2003

Large Truck Collisions—Safety and Liability



This information from the U.S. Department of Transportation does not mean to imply that drivers of large trucks are driving less safely than drivers of passenger cars. It does mean that

collisions involving large trucks—regardless of who is at fault—are major safety and financial concerns for all companies.

Larger is More Dangerous to Other Drivers

In 2001, 4,980 people in the United States died in collisions involving large trucks. Of these deaths, only 14 percent were drivers or occupants of the large trucks, while 74 percent were drivers or occupants of other passenger vehicles. (Ten percent

were pedestrians, motorcyclists, etc.)

When we look at collisions involving one truck and one passenger vehicle, the risk factor is even more apparent. In those collisions, 98 percent of the fatalities occurred among occupants of the passenger vehicles.

“What gets measured gets controlled.” Knowing the risk drivers face every day is a first step in managing that risk.

Safety Managers Already Know . . .

These statistics document what most safety managers and drivers know from common sense and experience—the larger the vehicle, the larger the risk and exposure for their compa-

According to the U.S. Dept. of Transportation

Large trucks—including tractor-trailers, single-unit trucks, and cargo vans weighing in excess of 10,000 pounds—are, pro-rata, responsible for more traffic deaths than passenger vehicles.

Though large trucks accounted for only three percent of all registered vehicles in 2001, they were involved in 22 percent of all passenger vehicle occupant deaths in multiple-vehicle collisions.

nies. Larger vehicles can take 20 to 40 percent longer to stop than passenger vehicles. They weigh 20 to 30 times as much as passenger vehicles. And federal hours-of-service regulations allow drivers of large trucks to be on the road up to 16 hours per day and as many as 70 hours in five days.

The Safety Gap is Widening

Since 1979, deaths related to truck collisions have declined by 24 percent overall. However, while the death rate has dropped 53 percent among tractor-trailer occupants, it dropped only 13 percent among occupants of passenger vehicles. The safety gap between large trucks and passenger vehicles seems to be widening.

So Why are we Reiterating the Obvious?

All drivers—regardless of the types of vehicles they drive—should be aware of statistics such as these. In his book, *In Search of Excellence*, author Tom Peters reminds us that what gets measured gets controlled. Knowing the risk drivers face every day is a first step in managing that risk.

As you discuss these statistics with your drivers in your

safety meetings, ask them to keep in the mind the following:

If a collision occurs, the driver of the large truck is less at risk of personal injury than occupants of the other vehicle; however,

A collision between a large truck and any other passenger vehicle, regardless of who is at fault, is more likely to cause a fatality or a disabling injury.

The probable consequences, in terms of injuries and liability of an at-fault collision to the driver of a large truck and to that driver's company, are enormous.

The National Safety Council, DriverCheck's partner in safety, reminds us that most driving "accidents" are actually preventable collisions.

The Goal of Safety-Conscious Driving

The goal of safety-conscious driving is to do everything reasonable to avoid a collision, regardless of who is at fault.

Every employee's focus needs to be on avoiding the collision in the first place—regardless of who may be at fault.

Thank you for sharing this and other safety information with your drivers and for being a partner in safety with

Collision Countermeasures Offer More Tips

For more information concerning safety-conscious driving, please reference the *Collision Countermeasures*, produced by the National Safety Council and DriverCheck. Contact your DriverCheck representative for additional copies.

Insurance Professionals See us at RIMS in Chicago!

DriverCheck will be exhibiting at the Risk and Insurance Management Society (RIMS), April 7 -10 in Chicago.

Please stop by and see us. We would love to talk safety with you in the Windy City.

DriverCheck and the National Safety Council Offer the NSC's Defensive Driving Course online at www.drivercheck.net



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