

# The facts about truck safety

## Key statistics

	Year ended		
	Jun-04	Jun-09	Change (%)
Fatalities involving articulated trucks <sup>1</sup>	159	131	-18
Fatalities involving rigid trucks <sup>1</sup>	93	91	-2
Total	252	222	-12

## During about the same period...

Number of trucks <sup>2</sup>	423,900	502,900	+19
Million of kilometres travelled <sup>3</sup>	13,652	16,199	+19

**In the year ended June 2009, 222 people were killed in road accidents involving trucks, compared to 252 in the year ended June 2004 – a decrease of 12 per cent. During the same five year period, the number of trucks on the road increased by 19 per cent; the total kilometres travelled by the industry increased by 19 per cent.**

## What causes truck crashes?

Australia's major truck insurer, NTI, has issued a report analysing 325 major truck crashes that occurred in 2007.

The accidents in the study all involved costs of more than \$50,000, but did not necessarily involve fatalities or injuries.

Inappropriate speed for the conditions accounted for 27.4 per cent of the accidents in the study.

The second most common cause of the truck crashes was driver fatigue, which accounted for 20.3 per cent of the accidents.

89.3 per cent of the fatigue crashes occurred toward the start of a driver's shift – within the first 500 kilometres of driving.

One in four of the fatigue crashes were on a Monday.

There are few official statistics available at the national level about the cause of truck crashes, even those where fatalities are involved.

The ATA is working with the BITRE to improve the quality of the data collected about the industry.

## The ATA's approach to safety

The ATA released a new safety policy in 2009. The policy calls for strong enforcement of the road rules, especially on speeding, alcohol and illicit drugs, and the full adoption of the safe systems approach to road safety.

The safe systems approach recognises that enforcement is important, but that all road users make mistakes from time to time.

This means governments and industry need to build systems around drivers to help reduce the number of mistakes they



<sup>1</sup> BITRE, *Australian Road Deaths Database*.

<sup>2</sup> ABS, *Motor Vehicle Census*, 31 March 2009. (ABS cat 9309.0).

<sup>3</sup> ATA staff estimate, derived from ABS, *Survey of Motor Vehicle Use*, 12 months ended October 2007. (ABS cat 9208.0).

make, and minimise the consequences of accidents when they occur.

To put this approach in place, the ATA is urging governments and trucking operators to focus on:

### **Safer roads...**

by building divided highways, more rest areas, and investing in low cost safety treatments like audible line marking.

### **Safer trucks...**

by encouraging the adoption of new technologies like lane keeping support and electronically controlled brakes.

One way that governments can improve the safety of trucks further is to allow the industry to use longer and safer combinations like B-triples and super B-doubles on suitable routes.

These longer combinations have better roll stability by design than conventional semitrailers.

Their drivers are licensed to a higher standard, and they can carry more freight. As a result, operators need fewer trucks to do the same work, which reduces the overall risk of accidents on the road.

### **Safer drivers...**

with strong medical standards and better training through the ATA's enhanced licensing standard proposal.

The existing driver licensing system is based on a time served model. For example, a driver must hold a heavy rigid licence for 12 months before applying for a semi-trailer licence, regardless of his or her competence.

Under the ATA's plan, drivers who complete formal training through a TAFE or other RTO and record their on-the-job driving for a specified period once licensed would be able to advance through the licensing system more quickly because of their demonstrated safety and competence. These drivers would have best-practice driving skills.

They would also have taken the first steps toward a formal certificate or diploma qualification in logistics, which could take them to the top of the industry.

### **Safer companies and customers**

Australia's best and safest trucking companies make safety the central focus of everything they do. An increasing number of the industry's customers now have a strong safety focus also, because of the new chain of responsibility laws in many states.

Under these laws, the managers and directors of trucking companies and freight customers can be held responsible for safety violations that occur because of their actions, inactions or demands.

These laws will become even more effective if governments heed the industry's call for the national heavy vehicle regulations to include seamless chain of responsibility laws across state borders.

The ATA runs a national safety accreditation program so every company can put safety management systems in place. The program is called TruckSafe. Companies who join the program have to meet strict safety standards and are audited regularly.

Official statistics show that companies in TruckSafe are twice as safe as non-accredited companies.