

# Types of Truck Accidents

Accidents between large trucks and cars usually involve much more serious injuries and more complex legal claims. Companies are well known for moving fast after a truck accident to deflect blame and/or stick newly injured and stressed crash victims with low-ball settlements.

**If you have been seriously hurt in a truck wreck, you need a dedicated truck accident lawyer on your side who has the experience and resources necessary to fight for you.**

The Spiva Law Group has a long track record of success in securing maximum compensation for victims of catastrophic truck wrecks in Savannah and across Georgia. Our team closely investigates each crash and its unique circumstances to compile solid evidence for the validity of our clients' truck accident claims.

**Schedule a free consultation with our Savannah truck wreck attorneys today to discuss your rights to compensation.** We can meet with you at your home, in the hospital, or in our Savannah law office. We will not charge anything to get started on your claim, and we only collect attorney fees if and when we recover compensation for you.

## Common Causes of Truck Accidents: What Type of Truck Caused Your Crash?

Our investigators at Spiva Law Group approach each commercial truck wreck as a unique harmful and costly incident that has upended a client's life. And with 30 years of experience investigating truck crashes on Interstate 95, I-16/516, U.S. 17, and other highways in and around Savannah, we have become very familiar with the types of trucks that are involved in serious wrecks.

Some of the common types of truck wrecks we investigate involve:

- Tractor-Trailers (18-Wheelers)
- Tanker Trucks
- Box Trucks
- Cement Mixers
- Cargo Vans
- Delivery Trucks
- Dump Trucks
- Flat Beds
- Garbage Trucks / Solid-Waste Trucks
- Car Carriers
- Log Carriers
- Passenger Buses

Large or heavy trucks — often called semi-trucks, semi-trailers, tractor-trailers, 18-wheelers, or big rigs — are commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) that weigh 10,000 pounds or more unloaded. Passenger buses and other vehicles designed to carry more than 15 passengers are also considered CMVs.

Commercial motor vehicles and the companies that put them on the road are regulated by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), as well as other federal and state commerce and traffic laws. **Our team has extensive knowledge of FMCSA regulations, and we work quickly to identify when a trucking company has violated the rules.**

## Georgia Truck Wreck Attorney: Common Types of Truck Accidents

In its most recent annual truck accident statistics report, the FMCSA says that a collision with a moving vehicle was the first harmful event (resulting in injury or property damage) in a large majority of crashes involving large trucks. The most common types of collisions between CMVs and other motor vehicles are:

- **Rear-end accidents.** A “rear-ender” happens when a truck doesn’t slow or stop in time to avoid hitting a vehicle it is following. Heavy trucks need more room than passenger cars to slow their momentum or stop, which makes following too closely (“tailgating”) a particularly reckless practice. Driving while fatigued or drowsy, as well as distracted driving, also leads to rear-end accidents. Sometimes investigations show that the brakes failed on a truck involved in a rear-end accident.
- **Sideswipe accidents.** A sideswipe is an accident in which the sides of two vehicles collide. Truck drivers get into sideswipe accidents by failing to look before changing lanes or by oversteering in curves and encroaching on vehicles in neighboring lanes. Abruptly accelerating or suddenly braking can cause a semi-truck’s cab and/or trailer to skid outside of its lane and sideswipe another vehicle.
- **Side-impact crashes.** When the front of a truck hits the side of another vehicle, the crash may be described as a side-impact, angle, or T-bone collision. Being hit from the side of a passenger vehicle is dangerous because there is less protection for occupants than in the front or rear of the vehicle. Meanwhile, the full the weight of the truck is behind it when it hits a car in a T-bone crash.
- **Underrides.** The undercarriage of a commercial truck sits high enough above the road for passenger cars and small trucks to be pushed under a trailer during a collision. In such an underride, the upper portion of a car may be damaged or sheared off, leaving anyone sitting upright in the vehicle vulnerable to catastrophic injury. Most large commercial trucks are required to have rear underride guards, but U.S. standards do not provide full protection, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Underrides occur in rear-end collisions and side-impact or T-bone accidents.
- **Head-on collisions.** A head-on accident, in which the fronts of two vehicles collide, is among the most deadly accidents because the weight and speed of both vehicles

compounds the force of impact. Because a commercial truck is far heavier than any passenger vehicle, the passenger car occupant is more likely to be badly injured or killed. Typically, when a truck crosses the centerline into the path of an oncoming vehicle, it is because a truck driver is impaired by fatigue and may have dozed off, or the trucker is distracted, such as by using a cellphone.

Some common and potentially destructive single-vehicle truck accidents include:

- **Jackknives.** A jackknifed truck is one in which the cab and trailer have slid toward each other like a folding pocket knife. When the cab or trailer spins inward around the truck's center of gravity, the motion is known as a "yaw." A jackknife accident occurs when the truck loses traction, such as due to suddenly braking, or exceeding a safe speed in rain, snow, ice, or a sharp turn.
- **Rollovers.** Large trucks have a higher risk of rolling over than passenger cars because their height creates a high center of gravity that makes them less stable. Trucks may roll onto their sides or roofs after rounding curves too fast, including on highway entrance and exit ramps. In extreme cases, high winds may help to tip a large truck and cause a rollover accident.
- **Cargo shifts and spills.** If cargo on a transfer truck has not been properly secured, it can come loose and suddenly shift during a turn, a sudden stop, or on a steep grade. The abrupt movement of thousands of pounds of cargo can throw a large truck or its trailer off balance and cause a driver to lose control of the vehicle and crash. If a cargo shift leads to a spill, cargo may hit other vehicles in traffic and/or cause drivers in other vehicles to crash from hitting or swerving to avoid debris. Hazardous material (HazMat) spills can damage property and the environment, in addition to causing personal injuries.

When a truck driver loses control of his or her rig and wrecks, anything or anyone in the path of the massive, out-of-control truck cab, trailer, and/or its cargo can be badly damaged or injured. Catastrophic truck accidents on busy highways often lead to pileups, as multiple vehicles coming upon the scene abruptly brake, swerve, crash, and/or get hit by other vehicles. If you have been badly hurt or lost a loved one in a truck accident, you will need an experienced personal injury lawyer to fight for the compensation you deserve from a corporate trucking firm and their insurers. Trucking companies have huge investments in their trucks and truck drivers. An accident is already a big loss that they do not want made worse by having to pay you.

## What to Do in Case of a Semi Truck Accident

The following is a helpful checklist that you should follow if you are involved in a truck accident.

- Your safety is the most important priority. **Move to a secure location** if you can and **call 911**. Do not leave the accident scene. Put out flares or reflectors to alert other drivers to help prevent a second collision.
- **Get as much information as you can about the truck driver**. You'll need to get the driver's name, address, phone number, and operator license number. Any additional information about the state of license, insurance provider and policy number, the truck's DOT number, the vehicle license plate number, and registration is also helpful.
- You will also need the **name, contact information, and insurer information** for the owner of the truck and the truck driver's employer.
- Be sure to **collect the names and phone numbers of any witnesses** to the accident. Ask them to describe what they saw and note their descriptions.
- **Take photos of the accident scene and the damage to vehicles**, if possible. Note any physical damage and identifiers, such as license tags, logos, and warnings. If you cannot take photographs, take detailed notes.
- Once the police arrive on the scene, it is important to **get the police incident report number, the officer's badge number, and the police department** that is handling the case.
- **Notify your insurance company** about the accident. Provide only basic facts about the accident, such as time, location, and who was involved. **Do not give a written or recorded statement** about the cause of the crash without getting help from an attorney.
- Serious injuries are not always obvious following an accident. Do not make any comments about your injuries until you see a doctor. Even if you don't feel any symptoms right after the crash, you should still **get a thorough medical exam as soon as possible**.

## A Semi Truck Accident Attorney Can Help You With Injuries

Whatever type of truck accident occurs, the injuries and damages suffered by the victims can be far-reaching and debilitating. If you are seriously injured in a trucking accident, you may not be able to work for long periods of time. In some instances, you may spend extensive time in the hospital or a rehabilitation facility recuperating from injuries.

The following are some of the most common types of injuries in trucking accidents:

- **Broken Bones and Fractures:** The amount of blunt force involved in a trucking accident can break bones and leave fractures that are severe and painful.

- **Brain and Head Injuries:** Head injuries can range from mild concussions to severe traumatic brain injuries (TBI), which can result in a variety of negative effects. These injuries are likely to be life-altering. Initial symptoms may include nausea, confusion, problems with vision, and other cognitive impairment.
- **Amputated Limbs/Extremities:** Limbs such as arms, legs, hands, or feet can be severed during the impact of an accident, or they may have to be amputated if the damage is extensive.
- **Burns:** These injuries tend to happen more with commercial trucks than in regular car accidents. There is a greater risk of gas tanks rupturing and catching on fire. Burns can cause painful and disfiguring injuries.
- **Spinal Cord Injuries:** The impact of a truck accident can injure or damage the muscles or nerves in the spinal cord, leading to partial or complete paralysis. These types of injuries cause severe pain and require extensive rehabilitation.
- **Neck and Back Injuries:** The abrupt force that hurts drivers and passengers in an accident can result in neck and back injuries, which can lead to severe pain or paralysis.
- **Internal Injuries:** The force of impact can cause severe internal trauma in a serious accident. These types of injuries involve the liver, pancreas, bladder, spleen, or kidneys, and they can be very hard to treat.
- **Broken Ribs and Abdomen Injuries:** Injuries to the abdomen can be painful because they can affect vital organs. Broken ribs that are not diagnosed and properly treated can cause severe and long-lasting pain.
- **Lacerations and Cuts:** Glass, metal, plastic, and other materials on a vehicle can cause serious cuts and wounds, resulting in scars that are disfiguring or can become infected.
- **Wrongful Death:** Fatalities can occur in a commercial truck accident and may bring on a wrongful death claim on behalf of the victim's family members.

## Truck Accidents: Dangerous Places and Times to Drive

Commercial trucks are the largest vehicles on roadways, and people who are involved in crashes involving commercial trucks frequently [suffer catastrophic injuries](#) that require lengthy hospitalization. Certain areas are especially hazardous for heavy trucks and passenger vehicles, so it can be beneficial to know how accidents happen, the most dangerous places to drive, and the most dangerous times to be on the road.

Commercial truck accidents are often far more complicated than crashes involving only passenger vehicles, because it is possible that multiple parties could share liability for a victim's injuries—depending on the cause of the accident. It is always in a victim's best interest to retain legal counsel at [Spiva Law Firm](#) as soon as possible if they suffer serious injuries or a [loved one is killed in an 18-wheeler wreck](#).

# Truck Accident Injury Lawyers: Truck Accidents By the Numbers

Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts (LTBCF) is an annual report from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). It includes statistics about fatal, injury, and property-damage-only crashes involving large trucks and buses.

According to the 2016 LTBCF (the most recent year available), 4,440 large trucks and buses were involved in fatal crashes in 2016. The figure marked a 2 percent increase from 2015, and large truck and bus fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled by all motor vehicles during increased by 1.9 percent from 2015 to 2016, from 0.141 to 0.144.

The same report also stated that the number of large trucks, specifically, involved in fatal crashes increased by 3 percent over that same year, from 4,074 to 4,213. The LTBCY also reported there were an estimated 119,000 injury crashes in 2016, an increase from the 97,000 reported in 2015.

## Top Causes of Truck Accidents: Truck Accident Injury Attorneys

One of the primary reasons it is so important for a truck accident victim to immediately contact a personal injury attorney is that it is critical to launch an independent investigation of the crash as soon as possible. Even when it appears that a truck driver was clearly at fault for an accident, numerous variables may have impacted their ability to operate the truck safely and the trucking company — or other parties — could be liable for the victim's injuries.

Commercial truck crashes can often involve one or more of the following common causes:

- **Driver Fatigue** — Also referred to by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) as drowsy driving, a fatigued driver is a person who is at heightened risk of falling asleep behind the wheel. Truck drivers often spend very long hours on the road, and FMCSA places strict limits on driving times that also takes into account the number of days and hours a driver is off duty
- **Defective Parts** — When a commercial truck crash is the result of some mechanical part failure, the possible liability will depend on what caused the defect. If a part malfunctioned because of improper installation, the maintenance company could be responsible. If a part was defective because of a design or manufacturing error, then the manufacturer could be liable for damages.
- **Distracted Driving** — Truck drivers are as susceptible to the distractions of cell phone usage as anybody else. Any one of a number of other distractions could potentially take a driver's eyes or attention off the road though, as truck drivers may be distracted by radio communication devices or Global Positioning System (GPS) devices.
- **Driving Under the Influence (DUI) of Drugs or Alcohol** — Drunk or drugged driving is illegal for all drivers, but operators of commercial vehicles are held to an even higher standard for intoxication. Instead of the 0.08 percent blood alcohol concentration (BAC)

limit that applies to most adult drivers, a commercial driver can be arrested for a DUI offense if they have a BAC of 0.04.

- **Failure to Maintain Vehicle** — If the company that owns a commercial truck does not properly care for the vehicle, it becomes a risk to all other drivers on the road. Many accidents are the result of a truck owner's failure to have necessary repairs performed or replace specific parts.
- **Traffic Violations** — A truck driver might go through a red light. Some could ignore traffic signs. It is not uncommon for a truck driver who causes a crash to be cited for reckless driving. Any traffic citation a truck driver is issued relating to the accident can be used to demonstrate their negligence in court.
- **Overloaded or Improperly Loaded Truck** — A different company may have been responsible for the loading of cargo on a commercial vehicle, and failure to properly secure cargo or improperly placing or overfilling the truck can result in the driver losing control of the vehicle.
- **Other Drivers** — Truck drivers may be unable to avoid collisions because of the actions of another motorist. In these cases, the driver responsible might be liable for harm caused to the victims in the crash.

## **Dangerous Places and Times to Drive: Truck Accident Injury Lawyer**

According to a Business Insider analysis of NHTSA truck accident data, the five states with the highest percentages of truck driver fatalities were North Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Alabama. Texas and Colorado were not far behind.

Most people see commercial trucks on the busier highways in their towns, but commercial vehicles do have to pass through other smaller thoroughfares on occasion during their journeys. For many years, the proportion of motor vehicle crashes was much higher in rural areas, but the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reported that the percentage declined to 51 percent in 2016.

According to IIHS time of day statistics, 48 percent of large truck crash deaths occurred between the hours of 6 a.m. and 3 p.m. The period between 9 a.m. and noon saw 668 deaths while 667 occurred between noon and 3 p.m. – both figures more than double the 303 fatalities that occurred between 9 p.m. and midnight. Crashes between midnight and 3 a.m. resulted in 362 deaths.

## **Who Can I Sue for Truck Accident Injuries in Georgia?**

Being the victim of a trucking accident in Georgia can be devastating – physically, emotionally, and financially. Cargo trucks with a fully-loaded trailer can weigh as much as 80,000 pounds. Crashes involving these vehicles, even at lower speeds, can easily cause serious injuries to everyone involved.

If you have been involved in a truck wreck in Georgia, an attorney can help you seek the compensation and justice that you deserve.

## Who Can Be Held Responsible for a Tractor-Trailer Crash in Georgia?

Like all motorists, truck drivers are human and make mistakes behind the wheel. However, when they make careless driving errors, the resulting consequences can be much worse than those of drivers of passenger vehicles.

When an accident occurs, liability may not rest solely on the driver's shoulders. Determining liability can be a complicated pursuit after a truck accident. An attorney can be a valuable resource during this process.

The following are examples of parties that may be responsible for a truck wreck:

- **Trucking Company** – Responsible for hiring and training employees. Companies often own and maintain their employees' trucks. Many different kinds of accidents can be traced back to employer negligence. Even if the trucking company was not itself negligent, employers are generally liable for the negligent actions of their employees.
- **Truck Maintenance** – The business that keeps trucks in good working condition. An oversight in maintenance can cause accidents.
- **Cargo Loader** – Failure to properly load cargo can cause shifting and precipitate an accident.
- **Truck Driver** – If a driver acts recklessly, isn't rested, or is distracted, they can be held personally responsible, especially if they are an independent contractor.

If you suspect that a truck driver's negligence caused an accident, it is crucial to determine whether the driver is hired as an employee or an independent contractor. A lawyer can help you do this.

## Was the Driver an Employee or Independent Contractor?

Determining if the driver is an independent contractor (IC) or an employee is important because it clarifies the driver's relationship to the company that they were driving for. Many trucking companies label their drivers as independent contractors when they are actually employees. The facts about the relationships between driver and employer are more important than the label applied.

The following considerations may indicate that a driver is an independent contractor:

- They set their own hours.
- They can refuse assignments.
- They may drive for various logistics companies.
- They own and maintain their own truck and equipment.

By and large, trucking companies and their insurance companies will attempt to place the full blame of an accident on an independent contractor if they can. There are some exceptions in which a company is responsible. Some companies provide ICs with a truck or a placard, so they could be liable if the crash resulted from a vehicular malfunction.

## **Determining Scope of Employment for Truck Drivers**

A trucking company is far more likely to be found liable for an accident involving an employee. An employee is hired, trained, provided benefits, and assigned routes by the company. Trucking companies are typically responsible for the vehicle and maintenance. An employee may be found responsible for an accident if they were not operating under the scope of their employment at the time the accident occurred.

An employer is responsible for the actions of the employee while they are carrying out tasks to benefit their employer. The responsibility of an accident is likely to rest upon the company if an employee met these conditions at the time of an accident:

- Driving during work hours.
- Driving on an established route.
- Intended to complete their work.
- Was operating under the terms of their employment.

However, if the accident occurred while the employee was conducting personal business, the trucking company is less likely to be responsible for the accident. If the driver was an independent contractor, it may be more difficult to find the company responsible, though not impossible.

## **How a Truck Accident Injury Lawyer Can Help**

If you are severely injured or if a loved one was killed in a commercial truck crash in Georgia, you should contact the Savannah truck accident lawyers at Spiva Law Group immediately. Our firm has a thorough understanding of federal and state commercial trucking regulations, so we will make sure that every negligent party is held accountable.

By working with an experienced personal injury lawyer, you will have legal representation for all negotiations relating to your damages. The Spiva Law Group can work to get you a fair and full settlement, and our firm will not be afraid to file suit should an insurance company be unwilling to provide fair compensation to you.

You can take advantage of a free consultation when you call us or contact us online today.