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Glossary of Truck Related Terms

By Michael Monheit, Esquire, Monheit Law, PC

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Axle

Structural component to which wheels, brakes, and suspension is attached. Drive axles are those with powered wheels. Front axle is usually called the steer axle. Pusher axles are not powered and go ahead of drive axles. Rear axles may be drive, tag, or pusher types. Tag axles are not powered and go behind drive axles. Axes may lock causing truck accidents.

Blind Spot

Areas around a commercial vehicle not visible to the driver either through the windshield, side windows, or mirrors; a common cause of truck accidents

Cargo Weight

The combined weight of all loads, gear, and supplies on a commercial truck or rig.

Common Carrier

A freight transportation company that regularly serves the general public with route service over designated highways. Or irregular routes between various points on an unscheduled basis.

Dead-Heading

Operating a truck without cargo; when an oil tanker is not full, the sloshing creates a dangerous situation conducive to truck accidents.

Drivetrain (Powertrain)

All the components, excluding engine, which transmit the engine's power to the rear wheels: clutch, transmission, driveline and drive axle(s)

GAWR (Gross Axle Weight Rating)

Maximum weight an axle is rated to carry by the manufacturer includes both the weight of the axle and the portion of a vehicle's weight carried by the axle.

GCW (Gross Combination Weight)

Total weight of a loaded combination vehicle, such as a tractor-semi-trailer or truck and full trailer(s)

Grade

Steepness of a grade, expressed as a percentage. Example: A vehicle climbing a 5% grade rises 5 feet for every 100 feet of forward travel.

GVW (Gross Vehicle Weight)

Total weight of a vehicle and everything aboard, including its load; could be an important piece of evidence in a truck accident.

GVWR (Gross Vehicle Weight Rating)

Total weight a vehicle is rated to carry by the manufacturer, including its own weight and the weight of its load.

Hazmat

Hazardous materials, as classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Transport of hazardous materials is strictly regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Jackknife

To place the trailer at a very sharp angle to the tractor; one of the major causes of truck accidents

Kingpin (axle)

Pin around which a steer axle's wheels pivot

Kingpin (trailer)

Anchor pin at the center of a semi-trailer's upper coupler which is captured by the locking jaws of a tractor's fifth wheel to attach the tractor to the semi-trailer.

Logbook

Book carried by truck drivers in which they record their hours of service and duty status for each 24-hour period. Required in interstate commercial trucking by the U.S. Department of Transportation

Owner-Operator

Trucker who owns and operates his own truck(s)

Payload

Weight of the cargo being hauled

PSI (Pounds per Square Inch)

In trucking, unit of measurement for tire air pressure, air brake system pressure, and turbocharger boost. The correct PSI is crucial to braking; inability to brake is a major cause of truck accidents.

Runaway Truck Ramp

Emergency area adjacent to a steep downgrade that a heavy truck can steer into after losing braking power. Usually two or three lanes wide and several hundred feet long, the ramp is a soft, gravel-filled pathway which absorbs the truck's forward momentum, brings it to a safe stop. Depending on the surrounding terrain, the ramp may be level or

run up or down hill.

Semi trailer

Truck trailer supported at the rear by its own wheels and at the front by a fifth wheel mounted to a tractor or dolly.

Tractor

Truck designed primarily to pull a semi trailer by means of a fifth wheel mounted over the rear axle(s); sometimes called a truck tractor or highway tractor to differentiate from it from a farm tractor.

Tractor Trailer

Tractor and semi trailer combination

Trip Recorder (On-Board Computer)

Cab-mounted device which electronically or mechanically records data such as truck speed, engine rpm, idle time, and other information useful to trucking management and truck accident attorneys

Truck

Vehicle which carries cargo in a body mounted to its chassis, rather than on a trailer towed by the vehicle.

Online Resources about Truck Accident Litigation

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Here is a list of helpful links related to truck accidents and the resources to research truck accident related data.

Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Web-Based Encyclopedia

Comprehensive site offering a wealth of knowledge based on breakdown of truck related accidents, cause of truck accidents, and injuries/death categorized by state and year.

<http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Part of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), NHTSA is a federal agency for the prevention and control of motor vehicle and truck related death and injury. NHTSA's mission is to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce traffic-related health care and other economic costs. <http://www.nhtsa.gov>

Hotline to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Here's the handy page and toll-free number to file a vehicle safety defect report, learn about the process of car and truck recalls, and search the database of consumer complaints related to car and truck accidents.

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/hotline/>

Child Passenger Safety Tips from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Buckle up for child passenger safety. Use this chart for the good, bad, and better options available in the marketplace today.

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/CPS/>

Statistics for Car Accidents

There were an estimated 6,356,000 car accidents in the US in 2000. Get the breakdown of how and why.

<http://www.car-accidents.com/pages/stats.html>

National Center for Statistics and Analysis

A division of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NCSA provides truck accidents and traffic safety reports, high profile cases, and data sheets.

<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-30/ncsa/AvailInf.html>

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Comprehensive site for all things related to transportation in the U.S.

<http://www.bts.gov/>

University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute Center for National Bus and

Truck Statistics

Collects and analyzes truck and bus accidents and related travel data

<http://www.umtri.umich.edu/cntbs/>

Safety and Fitness Electric Records System (SAFERS)

A division of FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) -- SAFERS offers truck company safety data and related services to the industry and the public over the Internet.

<http://www.safersys.org/>

Legal Sources: Trucking Accidents

Materials provided courtesy of Jim Ronca, Esq. jronca@srklaw.com

Truck Accident Resources for Lawyers

Truck Accident Lawyers Across the USA

A list of personal injury law firms in the USA who handle complex tort cases.

State by State Law Firm List

Additional Articles about Truck Accidents and Safety

News and other articles about truck safety and truck accidents.

Additional Truck Articles

Latest Truck Accident News

Online truck accident news stories.

Related News: Truck Accidents

Latest Truck Accident News

Statistics

Truck Accidents Stats

Pennsylvania Driver and Vehicle Services

Everything you need to know about applying for a driver's license, titling, and registration in PA.

<http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/>

Related eBooks:

[Online Resources about Truck Accident Litigation](#)

[Heavy Truck Accidents and Unnecessary Deaths and Serious Injuries](#)

[How To Get Your Kayak From Home To The Water](#)

[Tractor Trailer Truck Driver Fatigue](#)

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