New ATRI Study Reveals Factors That Increase Crash Likelihood When Commercial Big Rig Semi Trucks Are on the Road

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The **American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI)** (which is part of the American Trucking Associations Federation, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit research organization headquartered in Arlington, Virginia) has released some important research findings regarding the commercial trucking industry in this country, including recommendations on how carriers can increase the safety of trucks driving on our roadways.

These can be found on the ATRI website and involve:

- Research Linking Crash Likelihood to Driver History
- Research Into Safety Compliance Alternatives

Ken Allen Law, of course, has requested and received the complete text of the 2011 report entitled "*Predicting Truck Crash Involvement: A 2011 Update,*" *and we will be happy to forward a copy to anyone who requests it (free of charge, of course).*

From the report:

In its finding of the likelihood of a crash involving a commercial truck, researchers took information from the new CSA, where a system is used (the "Safety Measurement System (SMS)") of assigning numbers, or "normative scores" both to (1) carrier performance and (2) driver performance in 7 different areas related to safety (which they've called the "Behavioral Analysis Safety Improvement Categories (BASICs)").

Decisions were made in advance of CSA scoring on what would be okay — the "threshold." Then, after the scoring was done, if the numbers were over the top — or higher than the threshold — then the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) would take various

actions. FMCSA might send a simple warning letter if the variance wasn't that big. FMCSA might institute a full scale review, if the difference between the scoring and the threshold was huge.

What are the scores the government is looking at under CSA — what are the BASIC(s) that FMCSA is monitoring? The categories are:

1. unsafe driving
2. fatigued driving
3. driver fitness
4. controlled substances/alcohol concerns
5. vehicle maintenance issues
6. cargo-related issues
7. crash indicators.

According to the study, *"[c]lear conclusions cannot be drawn in instances where weights and crash likelihoods appear out of sync, primarily due to low sample sizes preventing several of the relationships from reaching statistical significance in this study. ... [t]he paramount message is that the relationships between driver behaviors and crashes can and should be measured in order to identify the industry's strongest truck crash predictors.*

Once identified, these behaviors must be targeted for interventions, both to improve CSA scores and to reduce the frequency of preventable crashes. Ultimately, by addressing the behaviors in each safety category, not only will scores for a carrier's respective BASIC decrease (improve), but all improvements will also indirectly feed into lower (better) Crash Indicator BASIC scores."

Bottom Line

In other words, truck drivers need to be protected, studied, and researched because truck driver behaviors have been shown to be a very strong contributing factor in big rig semi truck crashes.

The types of crashes where big, heavy, huge machines collide with smaller, more fragile vehicles – and where all too often, serious injury or death result.

Perhaps you are not surprised.