

# MEDIA RELEASE



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25 National Circuit  
FORREST ACT 2603  
Tel: (02) 6253 6900  
[www.atatruck.net.au](http://www.atatruck.net.au)

## **HEAVY RIGID TRUCK OPERATORS MUST UPGRADE SAFETY**

Companies that operate heavy rigid trucks must upgrade their safety procedures, following the release of new figures about the number of fatal truck crashes, the Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, Trevor Martyn, said today.

The new figures, released by the Federal Infrastructure Department, show there were 90 fatal crashes and 95 fatalities involving heavy rigid trucks in 2008, compared to 78 fatal crashes and 83 fatalities in 2007.

Queensland and Western Australia recorded the highest increases in the number of fatal crashes involving heavy rigid trucks. In Queensland, these crashes increased from 10 in 2007 to 21 in 2008; in Western Australia, they increased from 10 in 2007 to 17 in 2008.

Mr Martyn said the dramatic increase was totally unacceptable.

“Every company that uses heavy rigid trucks needs to take a long, hard look at their safety systems. If they don’t have safety systems, they need to put them in place – fast. In particular, these companies need to have:

- procedures to make sure their drivers are fit for duty when they start work;
- systems to train their staff and drivers properly, with regular safety reminders;
- systems to guarantee their trucks are maintained safely; and
- realistic delivery schedules, so drivers are not under pressure to speed or run risks in order to meet their timetables.

“You don’t have to be a big company to put measures like these in place. As part of the ATA’s commitment to safety, we run our TruckSafe program so every company can meet these objectives.

Companies who join the program have to meet strict safety standards, and are audited regularly. Independent statistics show that companies in the TruckSafe program are about twice as safe as non-accredited companies,” Mr Martyn said.

Mr Martyn urged governments to take action to reduce the number of truck crashes as well, including under the next version of the National Road Safety Strategy, due to take effect from 2011.

“More than 70 per cent of the heavy rigid truck crashes in 2008 were multiple vehicle accidents. A substantial number would have been in urban areas,” he said.

“As part of building a safer transport system, governments need to build urban roads that allow trucks and cars to drive safely together, with well-planned intersections, right turn lanes long enough for trucks, and reduced speed limits in areas where many trucks turn across the traffic.

“There also needs to be better education for motorists, because trucks handle very differently to their cars. It’s essential that motorists do not attempt to cut in front of a truck, or attempt to overtake one when it’s turning.”

Mr Martyn said the figures confirmed that the number of fatal crashes involving articulated trucks, such as semitrailers, has fallen.

“There were 130 fatal crashes and 150 fatalities involving articulated trucks in 2008, compared to 145 fatal crashes and 177 fatalities in 2007. But even one fatal crash is too many,” he said.

**Heavy rigid trucks are vehicles like furniture delivery trucks and tip trucks where the cab is fixed permanently to the load carrying area. In contrast, articulated trucks consist of a prime mover with a turntable that can be linked to one or more trailers.**

**The Infrastructure Department statistics can be downloaded from:**

**[http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2009/fhvca\\_q42008.aspx](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2009/fhvca_q42008.aspx)**

<b><u>Media contact:</u></b>	Stuart St Clair	02 6253 6900 / 0428 488 330
	Bill McKinley	02 6253 6900 / 0488 292 823