

Youth Riding in Pickup Truck Cargo Areas

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BACKGROUND

The cargo area of a pickup truck is not intended for passenger use and does not meet occupant safety standards, yet cargo areas too often are used for transporting passengers. In the U.S. each year an average of 50 youth under 21 years of age are fatally injured while riding in a pickup truck cargo area.¹

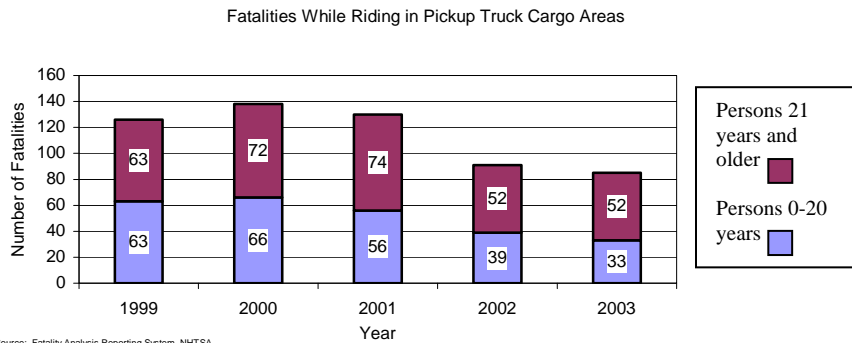
POPULARITY

In 2003 there were 227,475,999 private and commercial motor vehicles registered in the U.S., of that total 59% were automobiles and 41% were pickup trucks.²

INJURY EXPERIENCE

Fatal Injury

- From 1999-2003, persons 0-20 years represented 45% of all reported fatalities associated with pickup truck cargo areas.¹ National nonfatal injury and exposure data are not available.



*The decrease in number of fatalities from 2000-2003 could be due to a number of contributing factors.

Method of Injury

- One-quarter to one-half of pickup truck cargo area-related injuries to youth are from non-crash events (stopping and swerving).^{3,4,6}
- Studies from four states reveal that ejections and falls account for most youth injuries involving pickup truck cargo areas.³⁻⁶
- Truck camper shells do not prevent ejections from pickup truck cargo areas.^{6,10} Cargo area occupants may be injured by the shell if it detaches in a crash, or they may be poisoned by entrapped carbon monoxide from a leaking or rear-exiting truck exhaust system.^{6,12}

Injury Type

- The most frequent injuries associated with riding in the cargo area of a pickup include head trauma, extremity fractures and lacerations/abrasions.³⁻⁶
- Youth riding in the cargo area of a pickup sustain more injuries in a crash and these injuries are more likely to be severe than those riding in the cab area.⁶
- The risk of death to cargo occupants while riding in a pickup truck in a crash is eight times that of restrained cab occupants.¹⁰

Influencing Factors

Pickup truck cargo area-related injuries are more common during:

- summer months^{3,4,8,9,11}
- daylight or dusk hours^{3,4,5,9,10,11}
- on paved roads⁸
- in rural areas^{3,5,8,10,11}

A study conducted in California demonstrated that pickup truck drivers were more likely to⁷:

- be young and male
- report changing lanes frequently
- have received a traffic citation in the past 3 years
- report impaired driving within the past month
- drive a truck with a camper shell
- use a truck for transport to school or recreational activities

Prevention Recommendations

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends legislation prohibiting passenger travel in pickup truck cargo areas, <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;106/4/857>.¹³
- Over half of all states and the District of Columbia restrict passenger travel in pickup truck cargo areas. Most legislation includes exemptions that limit protection.¹⁵
- Pickup truck cargo area safety should be addressed in driver education classes and remedial traffic school.
- Further research is needed to explain nonfatal and non-crash injury events that can contribute to restricting cargo area passengers.

Tools*

Educational

- **Kids Aren't Cargo:** Poster and rearview mirror hangtag available through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.
- **Rural Roadway Safety Program:** Farm Safety 4 Just Kids' (FS4JK) roadway safety program emphasizes rural occupant safety issues, (800) 423-5437 or www.fs4jk.org

Legislative

- **State Traffic Safety Legislation, 2003.** State traffic safety legislation through 2003, National Council of State Legislatures, www.ncsl.org/programs/esnr/transp2.htm.
- **NHTSA Legislative Tracking Application.** Tracks action of 2004 legislative session, www.nhtsa.dot.gov/ncsl/.
- **Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.** Table shows which states have laws restricting riding in cargo areas and the major gaps or exemptions in those laws, www.iihs.org/safety_facts/state_laws/cargo_laws.htm.

Data

- **Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS):** National database of reported U.S. fatal crashes, www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/
- **State Department of Transportation:** State-based crash data
- **Local Police Department:** Local crash data

*The CSN National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety does not endorse a specific program or curriculum, but offers these as examples.

📄 This fact sheet can be downloaded from the Internet, www.childrenssafetynetwork.org.

For more information:

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