

Truck emissions—survey gauges trucking industry attitudes

October 18 2016, by Nicole Casal Moore



Truck traffic in the U.S. over a single day. Credit: American Transportation Research Institute

As the U.S. trucking industry faces new federal limits on greenhouse gas emissions, a University of Michigan team surveyed fleet managers to gauge their views on fuel usage, fuel economy and fuel-saving technologies.

The survey results, released today with the American Transportation Research Institute, include responses from nearly 100 heavy-duty fleet managers who operate more than 114,500 truck-tractors and haul 9 billion tons of freight across 1.8 billion miles annually.

The researchers found that:

- The median heavy-duty fleet [fuel economy](#) was 6.5 mpg. While that number may sound low, the researchers point out that these trucks haul tens of thousands of pounds at a time, whereas passenger vehicles weigh only a few thousand pounds each.
- On average, managers of the smallest fleets said that the price of diesel per gallon that would require seeking out fuel-saving technologies was \$3.50, while all other fleets (and all fleets overall) said \$3.00.
- Every heavy-duty fleet in this survey currently uses diesel fuel, with biodiesel blends B5, B10 and B20 being the most common alternatives.
- The most popular fuel-saving technologies on the truck-tractor were aluminum wheels, speed limiters and low-rolling resistance dual tires. The most common fuel-saving technologies on trailers were low-rolling resistance dual tires, aluminum wheels and weight-saving technologies. Larger fleets tended to more often utilize monitoring technology that would notify drivers and fleet managers if they exceeded certain speeds, but smaller fleets tended to utilize on-truck technologies.
- Nearly all fleet managers feel that new EPA heavy-duty emissions regulations will lead to higher truck operating and truck purchase costs.

New standards from the EPA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration require that emissions reductions begin in 2017.

"Reducing transportation-related emissions will likely gain even more importance in the coming years, as the push for greater greenhouse gas reductions comes not only from regulators within the U.S. but also on an international level," said Brandon Schoettle, project manager at the U-M Transportation Research Institute and lead author of the new report.

"And as greenhouse gas reductions occur in other sectors of the economy, transportation-related emissions will naturally constitute a larger percentage of overall emissions."

The trucking industry contributes in big ways to the nation's economy. In 2015, it generated \$726 billion in revenue as it ferried goods to the more than 80 percent of communities around the country that rely exclusively on trucks to deliver commodities.

Even when distributors use trains, it's large trucks that go the final mile, Schoettle said.

"And as the economy improves, the challenge increases for heavy truck fleets because people start buying more products and more of them need to be moved around," he said.

Provided by University of Michigan

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