



Office of the State Comptroller
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Ministry of Transportation
and Road Safety

Road Safety of Heavy Vehicles

Abstract

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Background

According to multiyear data, the involvement of trucks and buses in road accidents in Israel – and particularly road accidents causing severe injuries or fatalities – is higher than for other types of vehicles, and Israel's situation in this regard is worse than in most developed countries. The management of matters pertaining to the safety of heavy vehicles is under the spheres of responsibility of several government bodies, mainly the Ministry of Transportation and Road Safety (the Ministry of Transportation), the traffic department of the Israel Police and the National Road Safety Authority (RSA). These matters were previously examined by various committees. The main committee – the Sagis Committee – submitted its recommendations in 2002. These committees alerted about deficiencies and raised recommendations, but some of them have still not yet been implemented.

Key figures

104,000

number of trucks weighing more than 3.5 tons in 2018; about 3% of all vehicles in Israel

22,000

number of buses in 2018; about 0.6% of all vehicles in Israel

91

number of fatalities from road accidents involving heavy vehicles in 2018

27%

ratio of fatalities from road accidents involving heavy vehicles out of all road accident fatalities over the last decade

18 years

have passed since the Sagis Committee published its recommendations, the majority of which have not yet been implemented

30 years

have passed since the last comprehensive national survey of trucks was conducted


12 hours

maximum shift of an Israeli driver, which is one third longer than the maximum shift in the European community – 9 hours

53%


percentage of heavy vehicles found to have deficiencies out of all heavy vehicles inspected by Ministry of Transportation's mobile inspection units in 2018

Audit actions

 From March to December 2019, the Office of the State Comptroller audited the subject of the road safety of heavy vehicles. Supplementary audits were conducted until March 2020. The audit focused on the handling of the human factor and matters relating to the management of safety issues regarding heavy vehicles, the supervision, control and regulation of the vehicle sector, the operability of vehicles and the handling of safety-support infrastructure, were also examined. The audit was conducted in the Ministry of Transportation and in RSA. Supplementary audits were conducted in the traffic department of the Israel Police, in the professional training and manpower development department of the Ministry of Labor (Professional Training Department) and in the Medical Institute for Road Safety (MIRS), which is a subsidiary unit of the Ministry of Health.

1. Management of safety issues regarding heavy vehicles

Key findings





-  **The responsibility for managing the safety of heavy vehicles** – is dispersed among various government ministries with no central entity responsible to integrate the management of the matter and to coordinate between the various ministries.
-  **Master plan for cargo transport** – in 2007, the Ministry of Transportation began preparing a master plan for cargo transport. On the audit completion date, the preparation of the master plan and the implementation of the recommendations presented during the interim stages of its preparation (the last one being in 2014) have not yet been completed – and an action plan for implementing these recommendations has still not been formulated.
-  **Information collection** – there is no methodological procedure for collecting information about cargo transport by trucks and a comprehensive national survey of trucks has not been conducted since 1990.



Consolidation of units in the Ministry of Transportation – in October 2019, most of the units responsible for handling issues relating to heavy vehicles in the Ministry of Transportation were consolidated and subordinated to the Traffic Administration in the Ministry of Transportation.




Business intelligence system for road accident investigations – RSA established a BI system that facilitates the investigation of data on all road accidents.

Key recommendations


-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should appoint an integrating entity to receive responsibility and suitable means in order to lead and coordinate, both within the Ministry of Transportation and among the various ministries, all matters pertaining to the management of the safety of heavy vehicles.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should advance the preparation of the last stage of the master plan for cargo transport so that it can formulate long-range policy recommendations, should complete the implementation of the recommendations submitted during the interim stages of the master plan and prepare a plan for collecting information in the truck sector.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should ensure that manpower resources and all other resources provide an adequate response to the tasks imposed on the units handling heavy vehicles.
-  It is recommended that RSA should improve the data collection system, in collaboration with all other relevant authorities, including by analyzing the reasons for road accidents and factors that could prevent serious injuries during road accidents, while cooperating with additional parties possessing relevant information.

2. Managing the human factor

Key findings

-  **Training for Heavy vehicle drivers** – deficiencies were found in the theoretical and practical training of heavy vehicle drivers, inter alia: many drivers were trained using an outdated curriculum; study materials were missing; the instructions regarding the required syllabus for driving lessons are inadequate; there are no driving practice lots in Israel; the training on the matter of cargo transport was found to be inadequate; deficiencies were also found in relation to the training of and threshold criteria for theoretical course instructors, driving instructors and driving testers, and deficiencies were found in the supervision of the driving schools.
-  **Apprenticeships and continuing education program**– an apprenticeship period was not made compulsory for heavy vehicle drivers upon receiving their license and periodic continuing education courses were not regulated.
-  **Shortage of drivers** – a series of actions were not taken to contend with the existing shortage of heavy vehicle drivers, by improving the processes for locating and

recruiting candidates, improving the efficiency of the driver licensing process and drivers' work conditions. The cooperation between the Ministry of Transportation and other authorities, such as MIRS and the IDF, was inadequate; some of the work methods during the driver licensing process are outdated and do not provide an adequate solution for today's needs, and there is a shortage of professional manpower in MIRS.




-  **Revoking or suspension of a driver's license** – the provisions of Regulation 15C of the Traffic Regulations, 5721 – 1961 (the Traffic Regulations) regarding the revoking or suspension of a driver's license in the event of noncompliance with the conditions of the license are only partially being enforced: the Licensing Department in the Ministry of Transportation (the licensing department) is not regularly receiving information from the State Attorney's Office; the police forwards on-line information regularly to the licensing department, but the licensing department is exposed to information only when a request is made concerning a particular driver; and information about medical conditions that disqualify drivers is not forwarded regularly from the medical system.




Theoretical training – in recent years, the Ministry of Transportation and the professional training department took action, in collaboration with RSA, to update the curricula in professional training courses and to update some of the study materials in the courses.

Licensing of drivers – in recent years, the licensing department and MIRS began taking action to improve the efficiency and shorten the driver licensing processes.

Key recommendations




-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, RSA and additional relevant bodies, should prepare an extensive work plan, which includes implementation of suitable solutions to rectify the deficiencies and to narrowing the gaps found in relation to the training of heavy vehicle drivers.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, RSA and the IDF should take joint action to increase the number of heavy vehicle drivers, by advancing the efficiency of the licensing processes and by improving their work conditions.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Health should re-examine the format of MIRS activity and should take action accordingly to recruit the manpower needed by MIRS for it to carry out its role. It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Health should periodically review the issue of transferring the handling of drivers' medical examinations to private bodies and

the implications of doing so.

-  The Ministry of Transportation, the Israel Police and the State Attorney's Office should cooperate to define suitable arrangements through which the Ministry of Transportation will receive all relevant criminal and traffic information regarding drivers regularly and in real time from the law enforcement authorities. This will allow the licensing department to receive an immediate update in this matter, thereby enabling it to fully carry out Regulation 15C of the Traffic Regulations. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should consider instituting a procedure for re-examinations of "certificate of integrity"¹ from the police when renewing professional drivers' licenses.






3. Supervision, enforcement and regulation of the sector

Key findings

-  **Supervision of driving and rest hours** – there are difficulties in compliance with the rules – inter alia, due to the shortage of drivers and the lack of rest and refreshment stop. In addition, there is some unclarity in the wording of the rules applying to drivers with regard to hours of driving and rest.
-  **Regulating the use of a digital tachograph²** – the use of a digital tachograph, which can be expected to lead to significant improvement in the supervision and enforcement of drivers' compliance with the rules of driving and rest hours and driving speed restrictions, has not yet been regulated – notwithstanding a government resolution of 2005 that mandated the installation of a tachograph in heavy vehicles, and notwithstanding the announcement by the Director-General of the Ministry of Transportation during a Knesset meeting in 2017.
-  **Activities by the Ministry of Transportation's mobile safety inspection units** – there has been a continuous decline in the number of inspections being conducted by the Ministry of Transportation's mobile safety inspection units. The number of mobile units and the number of employees manning them have decreased and they are provided with only two old scales. The mobile units' activity is being performed without any methodological work plan, manually for the most part, and the computer systems are outdated and do not provide adequate solutions for their needs.

1 Information received from the police certifying no convictions for traffic violations or criminal offenses.

2 A tachograph (travel data recorder) is a mechanical device installed in a vehicle that enables the recording of the vehicle's movements and the driver's activities.

-  **Systemic enforcement** – the Ministry of Transportation, the Israel Police and RSA failed to prepare a systemic enforcement program for all enforcement authorities, which defines the spheres of responsibility of each of the authorities responsible for enforcement.
-  **Database for license revocations** – a database containing full and reliable details about license revocations imposed by the various authorities has not yet been established. This diminishes police officers' ability to carry out effective enforcement against drivers who continue driving after their license has been revoked.
-  **Traffic safety officers** – rules regarding the format of employment of traffic safety officers have not yet been instituted; there is a shortage of safety officers and there is no requirement that safety officers must have practical experience driving the types of vehicles under their responsibility; the Ministry of Transportation is not offering organized periodic continuing education courses for safety officers, and its supervision of the safety officers' activity is inadequate, inter alia, as a result of a shortage of manpower and computerized tools.
-  **New standard for restraining of cargoes** – the standard was published in 2014; however, since its directives have not yet been anchored in the Traffic Regulations, the standard is not binding upon those engaging in cargo transport and cannot be enforced.
-  **Supervision and regulation of the conveyance and transport of hazardous substances** – there are deficiencies in the regulation of the conveyance and transport of hazardous substances, in the training of officials engaging in this field and in supervision and enforcement in this field, inter alia, due to a grave shortage of resources – both human resources, computer systems and vehicles.








Enforcement unit in the Israel Police – in 2017, a unit responsible for law enforcement on heavy vehicles was established in the Israel Police.

Safety officers – in 2018, the Traffic Regulations were amended to regulate the role of safety officers.

Cargo restraining – in 2014, a new standard regarding the restraint of cargoes was formulated.

Key recommendations




-  The Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security, the Israel Police and RSA should cooperate promptly to regulate the use of a digital tachograph and to clarify the rules regarding driving and rest hours.
-  It is recommended that the Digital Israel Headquarters³, in collaboration with all other relevant authorities, particularly the Israel Police, should take action to complete the project establishing a database of revoked licenses in order to improve the accuracy of the information presented in the database of revoked licenses.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should review its fleet of safety mobiles, its scales and its workforce and should prepare a plan for enhancing the effectiveness of the inspections of heavy vehicles. It is also recommended that the computer systems should be upgraded and that detailed annual work plans should be formulated.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should review the format of employment of safety officers and consider designing a model that will create the necessary balance between the various parties – safety officers, company owners, company managers and drivers. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should periodic continuing education courses for safety officers, enhance the supervision over them and create appropriate interfaces between all units responsible for enforcement in and supervision of the heavy vehicle sector.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation should complete the regulation of the new standard for the restraining of cargoes; it should take the measures necessary to implement the Haulage Services Law and its regulations and should take action to improve the regulation and supervision of the transport sector in general and the transport of hazardous substances in particular.

³ The Headquarters for the National Digital Israel Initiative is subordinated to the Ministry of Social Equality. Subsequent to the audit period, it was subordinated to the National Digital Ministry.

4. Operability of vehicles and the construction of safety-support infrastructure

Key findings





-  **Age of trucks** – there is no limit on the age of trucks.
-  **Vehicle inspections** – there is no coherent and updated methodology for vehicle inspections.
-  **Safety-support infrastructures** – the infrastructures supporting the safety of heavy vehicles are quite lacking, such as rest areas for drivers to rest and freshen up, parking bays, wide shoulders, crawler lanes and overnight parking areas. The Ministry of Transportation has not yet formulated a program for reducing the lack of safety-support facilities.

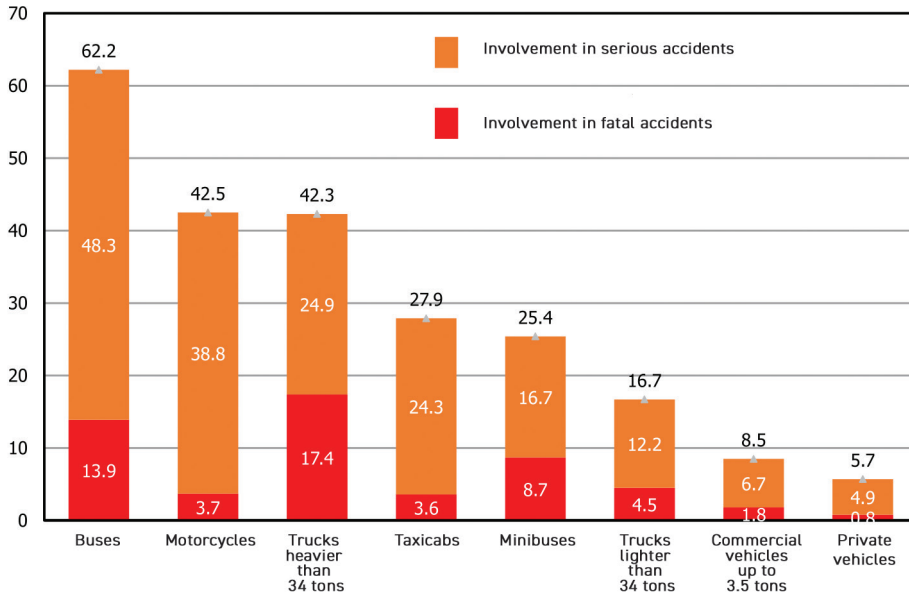


Safety infrastructures – In 2018, TransIsrael Highway Ltd. began preparing a plan the designing of emergency parking and rest bays along Route 6.

Key recommendations

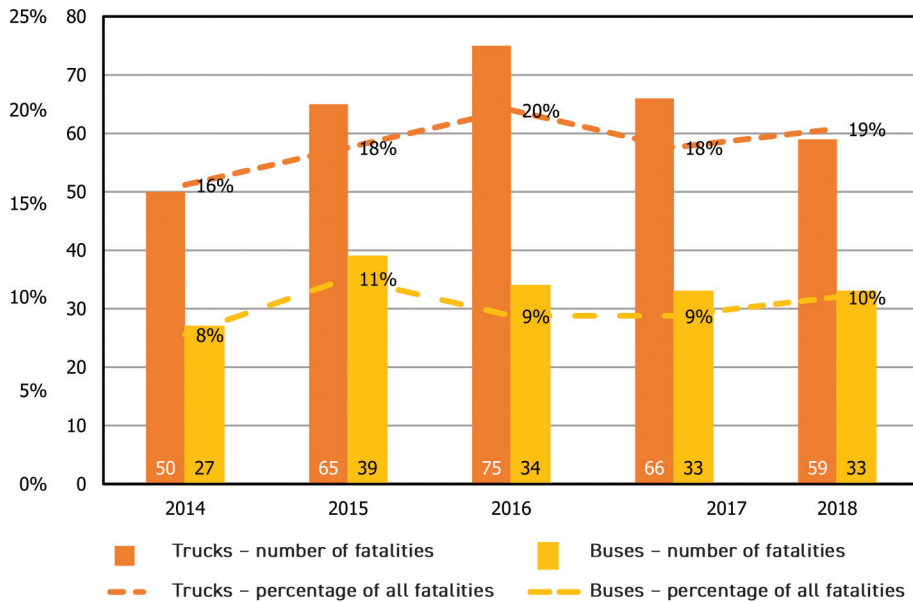
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation and RSA should continue their activity for identifying and implementing technological systems that may contribute to the prevention of accidents, such as: systems to monitor “blind spots” and systems to monitor driving patterns, particularly of heavy vehicles.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation, in collaboration with its performance arms, such as the National Roads Company, the National Transport Infrastructure Company Ltd. and TransIsrael Highway Ltd., and in coordination with local authorities and planning institutions, should take action to formulate a national plan for adding parking bays, rest areas, widened shoulders, crawler lanes and overnight parking areas.

Ratio of involvement in serious and fatal road accidents per 10,000 vehicles, by type of vehicle, 2018



Source: National Road Safety Authority, "Trends – a Decade of Road Safety in Israel 2008 – 2018", November 2019.

Fatalities during accidents involving heavy vehicles



Source: National Road Safety Authority data, processed by the Office of the State Comptroller.

Summary

Various committees and teams have been indicating safety problems relating to heavy vehicles since 2002 and submitted recommendations for resolving them. However, the handling of some of the issues has been delayed for long periods of time and many of these recommendations have not yet been implemented. Considering all raised deficiencies and the immediate dangers posed by the issues pointed out in this report, all authorities responsible for handling the sector – primarily the Ministry of Transportation and RSA – should prepare a coordinated work plan for rectifying all of the deficiencies raised and should take action to implement it in order to improve the road safety of heavy vehicles and prevent personal injuries and property damage.