

Dangerous Trucks on Washington Roads

Local News

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SEATTLE - If you were one of the estimated 30 million Americans who spent part of the long weekend on the nation's roads, a new analysis from the *American Association of Justice (AAJ)* finds that drivers in Washington state share the road with 57 state trucking companies that have been cited for safety violations.

Brad Fulton, president of the *Washington State Association of Justice*, says it's a nationwide problem.

"You know, out of 200,000 trucks, there are 28,000 violations. That's a pretty high percentage and, you know, they kill people."

The trucking industry says the analysis doesn't accurately reflect current vehicle safety because much of it is more than 20 years old, and many companies faulted are no longer in business.

Fulton represented two volcano experts who were killed on Highway 101 when a speeding log truck failed to negotiate a turn and spilled its load of logs onto the experts' car. Fulton said the truck was overloaded by more than 7,000 pounds at the time of the accident.

"It's an increasing problem with the fuel prices, because the margin for a trucker to make a profit has been cut so far. They're cutting corners every way they can, and one of those ways to do that, obviously, is to try to carry more weight and make fewer trips, because you're using less fuel that way."

Washington State increased penalties for drivers who operate overweight in response to the accident, but Fulton says truckers often know when weigh stations are open, and he believes too many still take risks.

The "Warning! Safety Violations Ahead" report is on the Web at www.justice.org