Why Tire Blowouts Cause So Many Truck Accidents on Texas Highways

Our Houston truck accident lawyers explain the risks and your legal options

If you've ever seen chunks of shredded rubber scattered across I-10, I-45, or the I-610 Beltway around Houston, you've seen the aftermath of a tire blowout. These incidents aren't just highway eyesores – they're high-speed hazards that put everyone on the road at risk and often result in serious, sometimes fatal, truck accidents on Texas roads.

Tire blowouts cause thousands of crashes each year across the United States. In Texas, where extreme heat, heavy traffic and long-haul commercial trucks are common, the dangers are even greater. Blowouts can cause a driver to lose control within seconds, sending a truck or another vehicle veering into another lane, flipping over or slamming into nearby cars.

If you've been injured in a crash involving a blown-out tire – especially one involving a tractor-trailer or semi-truck – it's important to understand your legal rights. The experienced Houston truck accident attorneys at Smith & Hassler know all about these cases. Our legal team has years of experience handling such complex truck accident claims. As a result, we know why these crashes happen, how liability is determined and what victims should do to protect their rights.

How common are truck tire blowouts?

The short answer? Very common. Every year, thousands of people are injured and hundreds are killed in accidents involving tire blowouts. In recent years, nearly 650 people died as a result of tire blowout-related motor vehicle accidents, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In addition, 8,000 to 11,000 truck accidents occur each year on average due to tire blowouts, which works out to roughly 6 percent of all truck accidents per year, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

And when it comes to highway truck accidents, I-45 in Houston is one of the deadliest stretches of highway. A study conducted by Value Penguin ranked I-45 in Harris County, Texas as the 23rd most dangerous road in the country. As a result, drivers should be on high alert for tire blowouts when driving on highways like I-45 in Houston.

What causes tire blowouts on highways like I-10, I-45 and The Loop in Houston?

A tire blowout happens when a tire rapidly loses air pressure and essentially explodes. At highway speeds, this can instantly destabilize a vehicle, which can be catastrophic when you're dealing with a fully-loaded, 80,000-pound tractor-trailer. Common causes of highway tire blowouts, especially involving trucks, can include:

- **Underinflated tires** – Low pressure causes the tire to flex too much and overheat.
- **Overloaded vehicles** – Exceeding the weight limit puts extreme stress on the tires.
- **Worn treads or balding tires** – Tires with little to no tread are more likely to burst.
- **Potholes or debris** – Striking road hazards at high speeds can rupture tires instantly.
- **Manufacturer defects** – Some tires fail due to poor design or production flaws.
- **Improper tire maintenance** – Drivers or companies may neglect regular inspections or ignore visible wear.

In commercial trucking, tire blowouts are particularly dangerous. An 18-wheeler with a blown tire on a highway can trigger a multi-vehicle pileup that results in serious injuries or fatalities. This is why it's critical that truck tires are well maintained at all times, especially when they're operating on busy highways in and around Houston.

Common types of accidents caused by truck tire blowouts

When a truck tire suddenly fails on a highway, the result is often more than just debris on the road. The loss of control can trigger a chain reaction of violent, high-speed crashes. Some of the most common types of accidents caused by truck tire blowouts include:

- **Rollover accidents –** A blown tire can cause a fully loaded tractor-trailer to tip and roll, especially if the blowout occurs on a curve or at highway speed. Rollovers often block multiple lanes of traffic and can trap or crush occupants in nearby vehicles.
- **Jackknife crashes –** If a tire blowout affects a drive axle, it can cause the trailer to swing out at an angle, folding the truck like a pocketknife. Jackknifing trucks often slide across lanes, wiping out smaller vehicles in their path and causing massive multi-vehicle pileups.
- **Rear-end collisions –** A truck that loses a tire may stop suddenly or drift into another lane, giving drivers behind little time to react. On high-speed roads like I-10 or I-45, a single tire blowout can set off a deadly rear-end chain reaction involving multiple cars.
- **Cross-median accidents –** In some cases, a truck veers across a highway median after a blowout, striking vehicles head-on in the opposite direction. These are among the most catastrophic types of crashes, especially on highways that lack concrete median barriers.
- **Lane departure and sideswipe accidents –** A tire blowout can cause a truck to drift sharply to one side, striking vehicles in adjacent lanes. These sideswipe accidents are especially dangerous in dense traffic or when passenger vehicles are pinned between the truck and a guardrail.

Why are truck tire blowouts more dangerous?

When a tire blows out on a passenger vehicle, it can still be serious. But when it happens on a fully loaded 18-wheeler, the consequences can be significantly more serious for many different reasons, including:

- **Weight and momentum** – A tractor-trailer can weigh 80,000 pounds. Losing control at highway speed makes it extremely difficult to regain control or slow down safely.
- **Size of tire debris** – Large chunks of rubber can strike other vehicles or create sudden obstacles in the road.
- **Driver reaction time** – It takes longer for truck drivers to react, especially if the blowout affects a steering axle tire.
- **Increased risk of rollover or jackknife** – A blowout on a rear trailer tire can cause the back of the truck to swing out.

These risks are especially high on congested highways like I-10 and I-45, where traffic flow can change quickly and leave little room for driver error.

Are tire blowouts typically the driver's fault?

Not always. In some cases, the driver may have done nothing wrong. That's why it's so important for your tire blowout accident to be thoroughly investigated. Liability – meaning who's legally responsible for compensating injury victims for their financial losses – for a blowout accident often depends on what caused the tire to fail. For example:

- **Was the tire defective from the start?** The manufacturer could be held liable.
- **Was the tire improperly maintained?** A trucking company or vehicle owner may be responsible.
- **Was the load too heavy?** Overloaded trucks are a violation of federal safety rules and the company that improperly loaded the truck could be to blame.
- **Did road debris cause the blowout?** In rare cases, a government entity or road maintenance contractor could be at fault.

Determining the cause – and identifying all potentially liable parties – is critical in building a strong truck accident injury claim after a blowout accident.

What evidence is needed to prove liability?

After a tire-related crash, securing the right evidence quickly can make or break your case. Here are some of the most important elements when attempting to prove who's at fault and liable for your truck accident:

- **Preserve the damaged tire –** The tire itself often holds the answer to what went wrong. Experts can analyze the rubber for signs of a defect, excessive wear, or puncture. In truck accidents, the tread can also be matched to the accident scene to prove where and when the blowout occurred.

- **Request truck maintenance logs –** Federal regulations require trucking companies to inspect and maintain their tires. If a company failed to replace a worn tire or ignored signs of damage, they can be held accountable. Ask for maintenance and inspection records.

- **Get black box data –** Many commercial trucks are equipped with electronic logging devices (ELDs) and event data recorders (EDRs), which store key information like speed, brake usage, and hours of service (HOS) – all of which are strictly regulated by the FMCSA. This can show whether a driver reacted appropriately after a blowout or was violating safety regulations.

- **Photographs and witness statements –** Take photos of the crash scene, tire fragments, road conditions, and vehicle damage. Get the names and contact information from anyone who saw the accident or the tire blow. Eyewitness testimony and crash scene photos can be powerful pieces of evidence in support of your truck accident claim.

- **Expert inspection –** Sometimes a tire must be sent to a forensic engineer or product liability expert to determine whether it failed due to design or manufacturing issues. Your attorney can demand that such an inspection take place in order to determine exactly why the tire blew out and caused your collision.

Can tire manufacturers be held responsible?

Yes. Tire manufacturers can be held liable under product liability law if a tire defect or design flaw caused the tire blowout. Common defects that lead to tire recalls and lawsuits include:

- **Tread separation** – Where the rubber peels away from the body of the tire.
- **Sidewall failure** – Often caused by weak materials or poor construction.
- **Air retention issues** – Sometimes due to valve stem or bead problems.

In these cases, injury victims don’t need to prove negligence — just that the tire was defective and the defect caused their injuries.

What are trucking companies required to do to prevent blowouts?

Trucking companies in Texas and across the U.S. must follow strict safety rules enforced by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). These include:

- **Daily inspections** – Drivers must check their tires before every trip.
- **Maintenance standards** – Companies must replace worn or damaged tires and keep records.
- **Tread depth rules** – Tires must have a tread depth of at least 4/32 of an inch on front wheels and 2/32 on other wheels.

When a trucking company fails to maintain its fleet, skips inspections, or pressures drivers to ignore safety issues, it can be held legally responsible for any resulting accidents.

What should I do after a tire blowout crash in Texas?

If you're injured in a tire-related accident – whether you were hit by a vehicle with a blown-out tire or your own tire failed – take these steps immediately:

1. **Call the police –** Make sure police respond and document the scene. You're required to contact the police if an injury occurred in your accident, according to Texas law.
2. **Seek medical attention –** Even if your injuries seem minor, see a doctor – some conditions worsen over time. Plus, by having a doctor examine you after your crash, you will create clear evidence linking your injury to your accident.
3. **Take photos** – If you are healthy enough to do so, take pictures of your crash from multiple angles. The more photos, the better.
4. **Preserve physical evidence –** Keep the damaged tire and any debris if possible.
5. **Do not repair or dispose of the tire until an attorney advises you –** Once repaired, critical evidence may be lost forever. Do not change or alter the damaged tire.
6. **Demand evidence from trucking company –** Trucking companies only have to keep certain data – like HOS records and black box accident data – for a limited amount of time. Make sure your attorney contacts the trucking company immediately and instructs them to not destroy such important evidence.
7. **Speak to an experienced Texas accident lawyer –** A knowledgeable truck accident attorney can start investigating your accident right away, including notifying the right parties and protecting your right to compensation.

Can I still recover damages if the blowout happened on my own vehicle?

Possibly – it depends on why the blowout occurred. If a tire shop sold you a defective product or failed to install a tire properly, or if the tire was under a recall, you may have a claim. Similarly, if the tire was defective or you were driving a company vehicle that hadn't been maintained, you may be entitled to compensation for your injuries.

How much compensation can I recover?

There's no set dollar amount or formula when it comes to tire blowout accident claims. Every case is different, but victims of tire blowout crashes may be entitled to financial compensation for:

- Medical bills (past and future)
- Lost wages and reduced earning capacity
- Pain and suffering
- Vehicle damage and transportation costs
- Permanent disability or disfigurement
- Wrongful death (for surviving family members)

If the at-fault party acted with gross negligence – for example, knowingly using defective tires – you may also be able to seek punitive damages under Texas law.

Talk to a Houston car and truck accident lawyer you can trust

Tire blowouts aren't always simple "accidents." In many cases, someone was careless – a driver skipped an inspection, a tire manufacturer cut corners or a trucking company ignored safety warnings. If you've been hurt or lost a loved one in a tire blowout crash, you deserve answers and accountability.

The Houston truck accident attorneys at Smith & Hassler have decades of experience investigating complex tire and truck-related accidents throughout Texas. We know how to uncover evidence, hold the right parties accountable and demand full compensation from insurance companies and corporations. Our case results speak for themselves, including $1.38 million obtained for a client in one truck accident case.

Learn more about your legal options. Contact us today for a free consultation. We'll explain your rights, answer your questions, and get to work building your case.