

Truck-tistics

Trailer Production Grows 50% in 1976

TRAILER PRODUCTION jumped approximately 50% in 1976, according to preliminary figures released by the Bureau of Census.

Manufacturers turned out 9,484 complete truck trailers in December to bring the total for 12 monthly reports to 103,840. However, not all the trailers manufactured last year have been counted yet; final figures promise to be several thousand higher when the revised totals are released.

The 1976 preliminary totals are 42% more than the 73,063 trailers reported in 1975 and are 53% greater than the 67,888 published as preliminary totals for 1975.

Van trailers paced the increase in trailer production. Representing about half of total truck trailer production in 1975, vans comprise 60% of the trailers produced in 1976. Some 61,726 vans were manufactured in 1976, compared to 36,579 published as preliminary figures in 1975, a 68% increase.

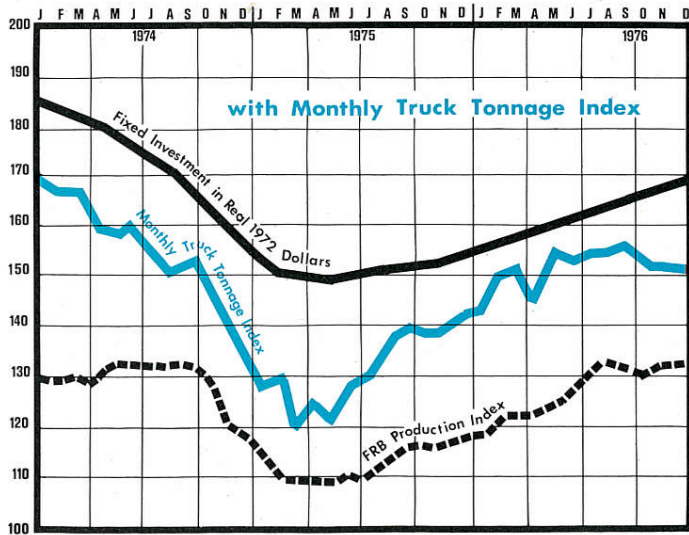
Production of tank trailers was up 51% compared to last year's preliminary figures. Some 5,997 tanks were built in 1976.

Pole and logging trailers were the only classification to decline from 1975 production levels. Only 857 were manufactured last year, while 1,049 were turned out in 1975, a 19% decline.

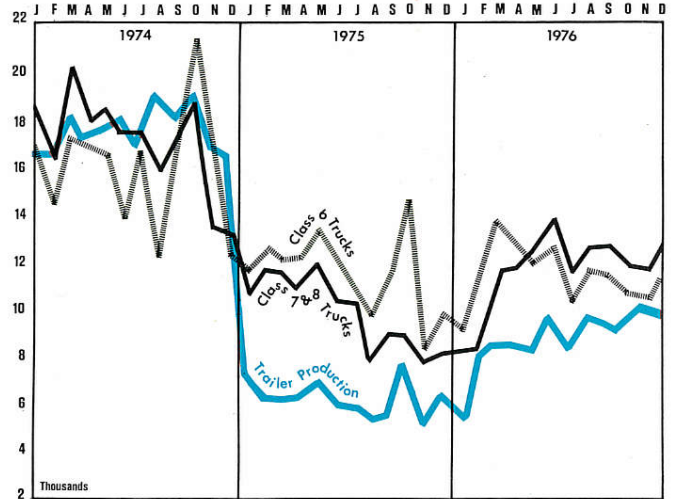
Platforms experienced slow growth. Manufacturers produced 17,586 last year, 8% more than the 16,322 in 1975.

Production of low bed trailers climbed 23% last year to 4,425. Some 3,575 were produced in 1975. Dump trailers enjoyed comparable growth in '76. Production increased 713 units (18%) to 4,783, compared to 4,070 manufactured in 1975.

Fixed Investment & FRB Production Index



Truck and Trailer Shipments



The year 1976 had mixed results for the manufacturers of containers, container chassis, and dollies or converter gear. Container production, 7,316 units, declined 10% from the 8,072 containers manufactured in 1975, but is 74% above the 4,183 containers listed as preliminary figures for 1975. Container manufacturers will experience growth if preliminary 1976 production figures are revised upward as greatly as they were in 1975.

The Census Bureau has already counted more 1976 container chassis than the total for 1975. Some 5,678 chassis are shown in preliminary 1976 figures, compared to 2,936 for 1975, a 93% increase.

Production of dollies or converter gear fell to 1,255, compared with actual 1975 figures of 7,212.

Buoyed by the phenomenal sale of models under 10,000 pounds GVWR, truck production soared to record levels in 1976. Factory sales of all trucks reached 2,945,248 last year, 2,637,314 of which were trucks of 10,000 pounds GVWR and under. Of the remaining 307,934 vehicles, 136,123 were Class 6 chassis, while 137,984 were Class 7 & 8 trucks and tractors.

Production of Class 6 trucks was 11,270, up 7% over the 10,518 manufactured in November. Class 7 & 8 trucks enjoyed a similar increase, up 11% in Dec. to 12,865.

Factors which indicate changes in truck and trailer production were primarily down, but their decline may be more related to the extreme cold suffered in December and January than to a general softening of the market.

The Monthly Truck Tonnage Index decreased 0.2 points in December. The index stood at 153.1, 11.3 points or 8% higher than in December, 1975.

The Federal Reserve Board Industrial Production Index fell an estimated 1% in January after increasing .8% in December.

On the positive side, the nation's expenditures on fixed investment increased significantly during the fourth quarter of 1976. Americans spent \$169.1 billion on structures (both commercial and residential) and on equipment such as trucks and trailers during the final quarter, compared to \$165 billion invested during the third quarter. □