

Truck-tistics

Trailer Manufacturers Match Best Year Ever

WHEN an industry ships 209,389 complete trailers in a year, of what significance is another 220?

That's how close truck trailer manufacturers came to making 1979, rather than 1974, the industry's best year ever, according to preliminary figures published by the Bureau of Census. Final totals are expected later this year.

The 1979 total shipments of complete trailers is 7% more than that of 1978, previously the second best year on record.

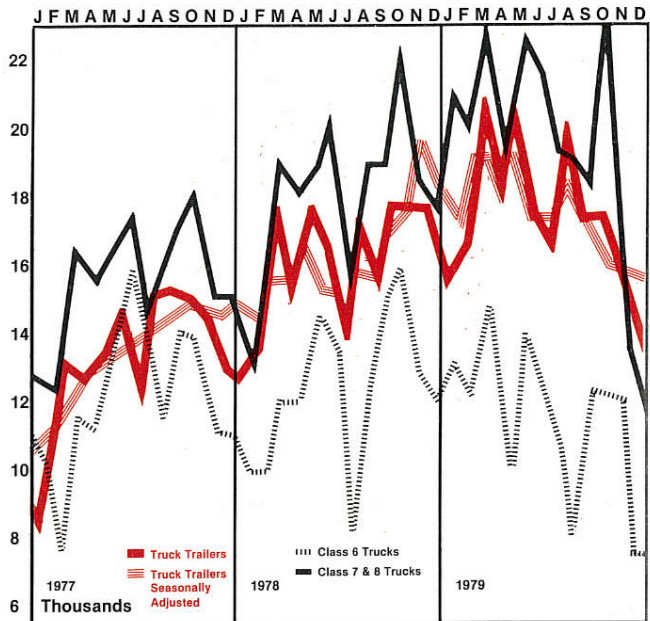
Shipments of complete trailers were ahead of the 1974 pace going into December, but a 16% decrease from previous month's levels prevented the industry from shipping a record number of complete trailers in 1979. Only 13,491 complete trailers were shipped in December, the fewest since January 1978.

While more complete trailers were shipped in 1974, 1979 was a better year in terms of total productivity. If the 14,820 container chassis and 7,299 dollies and converter gear were added to last year's complete trailer shipments, the result is 231,508 wheeled units, compared with 225,043 in 1974, a 3% increase.

Record Truck Sales

Despite decreases late in the year, factory sales of heavy duty trucks reached record levels in 1979. Factories sold 234,948 trucks with gross vehicle weights

Truck and Trailer Shipments



above 26,000 pounds during 1979, a 9% increase above 1978, the previous record.

Factory sales fell sharply in December, however. The figure only reached 11,547, a 15% decrease from November and half that of October.

Medium duty trucks, meanwhile, held steady in December. Factories sold 7,655 Class 6 trucks (gross vehicle weights of 19,501-26,000 pounds) during December, one fewer than November's sales. Factory sales of Class 6 trucks in 1979 reached 135,011 units, 8% below 1978 sales and 30% below the record 191,394 sold in 1974.

Leading Indicators Increase

Indicators of truck and trailer demand were steady or increasing slowly as 1979 ended.

The Monthly Truck Tonnage Index, an indicator of truck and trailer usage, increased 2.9% during December, according to the American Trucking Association. The index stood at 176.6, compared with 171.7 for November. However, the index was 10.4% (20.5 points) lower than it was in December 1978.

The figures are based on the ATA Research and Statistical Service Department's monthly survey of Class I and II motor carriers of general freight. Monthly responses represent more than one-third of tonnage moved.

Industrial production increased in January by an estimated 0.3%, according to the Federal Reserve Board's Industrial Production Index. The index, at 152.7% of its 1967 average, was 0.8% above its level a year earlier.

Fixed investment, a long range indicator of demand for trucks and trailers, was \$207.6 billion in the third quarter of 1979, according to revised figures published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The revised figure, in constant 1972 dollars, is \$4.1 billion more than that spent during the previous quarter. □

Leading Indicators

