

Van Trailer Manufacturers Set New Production Records Again in 1995

By Paul Schenck

TRUCK TRAILER manufacturers set new production records for the second year in a row. The preliminary total for complete trailers shipped in 1995 is over 282,000, a 20% increase above the complete trailer total for 1994, which also was a new record. While all trailers were up 20%, total van trailers were up 30%, and dry freight vans were up 40%.

Manufacturers of other types of trailers did not do as well in 1995. Platforms were up only 4%, while lowbeds were down 11%. Dump trailer production was off 21%, dropframe (furniture) vans were down 17%, and livestock trailers dropped 65%, at least in the preliminary totals reported monthly by the Bureau of Census, U S Commerce Department. Some tank trailer markets improved, but petroleum tank trailers were down 35% and bulk trailers were off 81%. Some of these categories will show more moderate changes when the Census Bureau publishes the annual summary in about six months.

The same type differences are reflected in the production totals that trailer manufacturers reported to *Trailer/Body Builders*. The largest manufacturers and those building van trailers all had good production increases last year. Manufacturers of other types of trailers were not always so fortunate.

The 21 largest trailer manufacturers reported here built almost 267,000 trailers in 1995. However, to compare this with the Census Bureau totals, we must subtract the production from plants outside the United States. Hyundai, Manac, and Fruehauf de Mexico sold some or most of their production in the U S, but their production is not counted by Census. The US-built total in this list is about 254,000 complete trailers, which is 90% of the shipments reported by the Census Bureau in its 12-month preliminary total of 282,119 complete trailers.

The top 10 manufacturers shipped 80% of the trailers reported by Census. This assumes that the Census report is

accurate. Such may not be the case. For example, six trailer manufacturers reported they shipped over 34,500 refrigerated trailers in 1995, while Census reported only 28,199 in its preliminary monthly totals. We counted 22% more reefers than Census did.

Another example is the 31,335 container chassis and 7,599 containers reported to us by six U S trailer manufacturers in 1995. This is almost 39,000 total intermodal units from six manu-

facturers—more than the 37,595 units from 15 manufacturers reported by Census.

To make the top 10 list in 1995, trailer manufacturers had to build more than 12,000 trailers. To make the top 20, manufacturers had to ship more than 2,000 trailers during the year.

Here is the 1995 production or shipment total reported to us by the leading trailer manufacturers in North America: *(Please turn page)*

1995 Production of 21 Largest Trailer Manufacturers

	Trailers	Chassis	Containers
1. Wabash National Corporation	42,424	119	50
('94 production)	34,308	1,371	3
2. Great Dane Trailers	36,514	2,002	2,049
('94 production)	29,756	4,639	4,271
3. Utility Trailer	25,066		
('94 production)	19,482		
4. Trailmobile Inc	21,239		
('94 production)	18,050		
5. Monon Corporation	21,172	7,814	50
('94 production)	13,478	7,575	6,000
6. Strick Corporation	(est) 18,500	16,500	
('94 production)	15,599	12,700	
7. Fruehauf Trailer Corporation	16,753		
('94 production)	16,092		
8. Pines Trailer Ltd Partnership	16,054		50
('94 production)	14,865		500
9. Stoughton Trailers	14,770	4,900	5,400
('94 production)	11,750	3,700	7,000
10. Dorsey Trailers	12,276		
('94 production)	12,010		
11. Hyundai Precision America	6,705	14,830	1,680
(Corrected '94 production)	2,128	14,944	6,395
12. Lufkin Trailers	6,141		
('94 production)	4,650		
13. Manac Inc	5,490		
('94 production)	3,150		
14. Fontaine Trailer Company	(est) 5,400		
15. Transcraft Corporation	3,571		
('94 production)	3,591		
16. Kentucky Manufacturing Company	3,240		
('94 production)	3,300		
17. Wilson Trailer Company	(est) 3,000		
18. Alloy Trailers Inc	2,661		
('94 production)	2,004		
19. Oshkosh Trailer Division	2,387		
('94 production)	3,045		
20. East Manufacturing Company	2,143		
('94 production)	2,337		
21. Ravens Metal Products Inc	1,476		
1995 Total	266,982	46,165	9,279

Record Trailer Production . . .

Wabash National Corporation produced 42,424 truck trailers and RoadRailer trailers in 1995. This represents an increase of over 8,000 trailers—a 24% increase over 1994 production. The increased plant capacity to reach an announced goal of 70,000-unit capacity was completed in 1995 while gradually increasing production throughout the year. Wabash also built 119 container chassis and 50 containers, which brings the unit total to 42,593. Included in the trailer total is production of 3,354 refrigerated trailers. Wabash started production in its new reefer plant late in the first quarter and started the second shift in the third quarter.

Great Dane Trailers produced 36,514 complete trailers in 1995, of which 11,286 were refrigerated vans. This is an increase of 23% in total trailers over 1994, and a 14% increase in reefers. Great Dane also built 2,049 containers and 2,002 container chassis, making a total of 40,565 units.

Utility Trailer built 25,066 trailers in 1995, an increase of 5,584 trailers over 1994. This is a 29% increase in production, and can be attributed in part to the new Utility dry freight trailer plant in Paragould, Arkansas. Production there started in August 1994 and was scheduled to ramp up slowly until it reached its design capacity of 24 a day in August 1996. Now producing at 20 a day, the Paragould plant is ahead of that schedule. Production of refrigerated trailers increased significantly at Utility, too. Reefer trailer production increased 10% in 1995 to 13,866, putting Utility Trailer even farther in the lead as the largest manufacturer of refrigerated trailers.

Trailmobile built 21,239 trailers in 1995, including an estimated 3,600 refrigerated trailers. The van total represents an 18% increase above the 18,050 trailers produced in 1994. However, 1996 production will be down considerably for a couple of reasons. Producing at capacity from two plants during 1995 reduced the backlog to normal build times. The 1996 production will be reduced by a plant closure of unknown length. At presstime, the Charleston, Illinois, plant was in the third week of a lockout. Trailmobile's Jonesboro, Arkansas, plant is continuing to produce at full capacity.

Monon Corporation produced 21,172 van trailers in 1995, a 57% increase over the 13,478 built in 1994. However, some of this can be attributed to a shift in the market from containers to trailers. Monon built only 50 containers in 1995, versus about 6,000 the year before. Monon's production of container chassis was up only slightly, from 7,575 in 1994 to 7,814 in 1995. In 1996, the chassis market outlook remains very soft at Monon, but van trailer production is proceeding about normal. Backlogs have dropped to 60-90 days in the large-order plant, and 90-120 days in the small-order plant.

Strick Corporation does not release production figures, but it is estimated that 18,500 complete trailers were produced in 1995, plus 16,500 container chassis. This is about an 18% increase in van production and 30% increase in chassis production.

Fruehauf Trailer Corporation produced 16,753 complete trailers in North America in 1995, including vans, flats, dumps, and tank trailers. This figure includes some U S-style van trailers built in the Fruehauf de Mexico plant north of Mexico City to relieve the heavy backlog situation here. Demand remains good in 1996, especially for 53-ft vans. Firm orders are in place for every month of 1996, but with some open slots in every month, too.

Pines Trailer Limited Partnership produced 16,054 dry freight vans in 1995, plus 50 containers. This is the highest production ever for Pines, an 8% increase over 1994. Pines Trailer opened a second plant in Kewanee, Illinois, in January 1994. Production continues at the two Kewanee plants and one plant in Greenville, Mississippi, but at a lower rate due to lower demand in 1996.

Stoughton Trailers built 14,770 complete trailers in 1995, a 26% increase over 1994. At the same time, Stoughton Trailers and Stoughton Composites built 5,400 containers, including 200 refrigerated containers. While Stoughton's 1995 container production was less than its 1994 container build, the 5,400 containers represent the largest container production by any US manufacturer in 1995. It was more than double and triple the number of containers built by the next two largest container manufacturers. Stoughton also built 4,900 container chassis, for a

total of more than 25,000 units built in 1995.

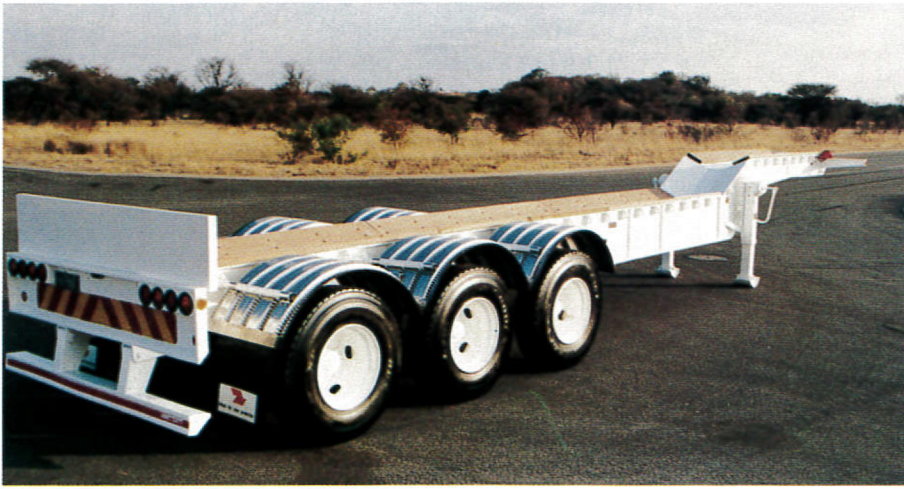
Dorsey Trailers built 12,276 complete trailers in 1995 (including 2,189 refrigerated trailers) plus 526 converter dollies. The 12,276 trailer build is a slight increase above the 12,010 trailers produced in 1994, but represents a much bigger increase in van trailers. Capacity had been increased in the Dorsey Trailers plant in Elba, Alabama, in late 1994. Dorsey's Northumberland, Pennsylvania, plant had been building flatbeds and dump trailers, but workers there walked out the last day of June. Production after June was scattered, and the plant was closed in December. Production of flatbed trailers in Dorsey's new Cartersville, Georgia, plant started in January.

Hyundai Precision America shipped 6,705 van trailers in 1995, more than three times the number shipped in 1994. (Hyundai's 1994 production figures have been restated to correct errors reported last year.) The Hyundai de Mexico (HyMex) plant in Tijuana, Baja California, also turned out 14,830 chassis, almost the same as in 1994. However, domestic container production dropped from 6,395 in 1994 to 530 in 1995. A new product at the HyMex plant is ISO refrigerated containers. HyMex built 1,150 refrigerated containers during the last four months of 1995.

Lufkin Trailers built 6,141 trailers in 1995, its highest production ever and a 32% increase above the 1994 production. Lufkin's breakdown was 4,759 vans, 1,117 platforms, and 265 dump trailers. Van trailer orders are off sharply in 1996, but dump trailer sales are excellent. Lufkin expects to produce about 4,800 trailers in 1996.

Manac Inc had a big year, with production increasing 75% over 1994. This is the result of having a full year's production from the new van trailer plant in Orangeville, Ontario, Canada, that opened in the fall of 1994. Between the Orangeville plant and Manac's headquarters plant in Saint-George-de-Beauce, Quebec, the company produced 5,490 trailers in 1995, an increase of 2,340 over 1994. Both plants were at capacity in 1995 and are continuing at that pace in 1996, although the big backlog is gone. Manac expects

(Text continued on page 66)



Mainframe beams of coil trailer have concave top flanges tilted to fit the curve of the coil. This trailer was instrumented and tested on an endurance course at a test track, including a test of roll stability during a lane change at 80 kph (50 mph) while hauling a 30-tonnes (66,000-lb) coil.

AFRIT Trailers . . .

trailer limited to hauling steel and aluminum coils. The recessed trough for the coils extends the entire length of the trailer, and there is no platform. The top flange of the main frame beams is concave and tilted inboard to fit the curve of the coil. The bottom flange is one-piece and is wider in highly stressed areas. The three-axle Coilmaster has a tare weight of 5600 kg (12,300 lb) when constructed of T-1 steel. Its payload is 32 tonnes (70,500 lb).

The Liftmaster is a side-loading trailer that loads and offloads cargo van containers, and the Cubemaster is a maximum volume truck and full trailer for dry freight.

From bottom-dump hoppers to drop-side platforms, AFRIT's trailer line is

extensive. The plant is equipped to handle one-of-a-kind specials as well as large orders. Engineering this wide range of trailers is made simpler by a component and subassembly standardization technique.

Even though the company is 100% commercial and no longer produces mobile equipment for the armed forces, it recently completed an interesting order involving mobile medical equipment. Included were ambulances, surgery rooms, X-ray unit, pathological lab, hospital wards, obstetrics unit, dental clinic, and supporting kitchens, water purification, and generating equipment. It was the largest mobile containerized hospital in the world, paid for by the Muslim charitable organization in South Africa, the Waqful Waqifin Foundation and given to war-ravaged Bosnia. □



Typical of the AFRIT government bid jobs for many years is this armored ambulance with extra protection against land mines.

Record Trailer Production . . .

(Continued from page 38)

to build about the same number of trailers in 1996, with current production a little more than 100 trailers per week.

Transcraft Corporation shipped 3,571 platform trailers in 1995. This is essentially the same as in 1994, because the plant was producing at capacity in both years. Transcraft is one of the few companies planning to build more in 1996. Transcraft's new plant in Mount Sterling, Illinois, is scheduled to begin production in February. This new plant is designed for high production of a single product line, Transcraft's Eagle platform trailer. Moving the Eagle line out of the company's headquarters plant in Anna, Illinois, will free production area for other lines, such as dropdeck platforms, a market Transcraft plans to re-enter in 1996.

Kentucky Manufacturing Company built 3,240 dropframe and furniture vans and dry freight vans in 1995, a slight drop from 1994. Production is continuing strong in 1996 because of the January-to-June heavy delivery season for household goods moving vans, but is expected to taper off for the last half of 1996.

Alloy Trailers Inc in Spokane WA increased trailer output 33%, going from 2,004 trailers in 1994 to 2,661 in 1995. The Alloy van trailer production included 230 refrigerated vans. Besides vans, Alloy produces wood chip trailers, flatbeds, and refuse trailers.

Oshkosh Trailer Division built 2,387 new commercial trailers in 1995, down from 3,045 the previous year, and 738 container chassis, down from 1,275 chassis in 1994. On the military side of the business, Oshkosh built 312 Palletized Loading System (PLS) trailers in 1995.

East Manufacturing Company shipped 2,143 complete trailers in 1995, an 8% drop from 1994 caused by the softness in the dump trailer market. Nationwide, dump trailer shipments were down 21% in 1995. East Manufacturing specializes in aluminum dump trailers, aluminum flatbeds, and aluminum refuse trailers.

Ravens Metal Products produced 1,476 all-aluminum platforms and end dumps at its new plant in Kent, Ohio, and older plant in Jacksonville, North Carolina. □