

Truck-tistics

Early Returns Are In: Trailer Industry Posts Third-Best Year in '96

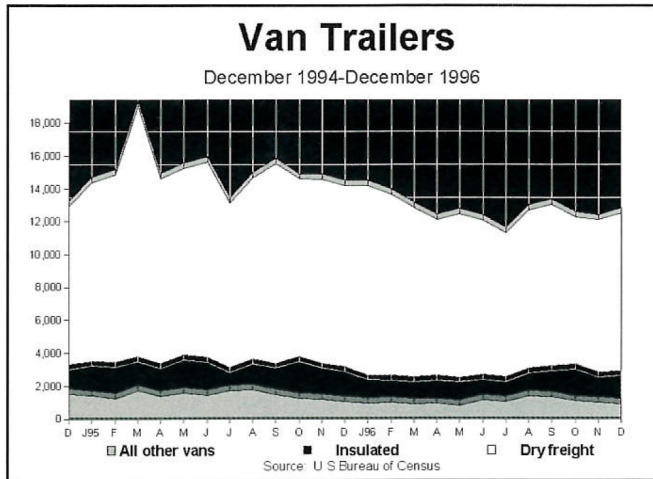
THE LAST THREE YEARS have been the best in trailer manufacturing history. Unfortunately, the latest was not the greatest for trailer manufacturers.

After two consecutive record-setting years in 1994 and 1995, shipments of complete truck trailers slowed last year. According to preliminary reports from the U S Bureau of Census, the industry turned out an estimated 224,753 trailers in 1996, down 19% from the record performance set in 1995. Shipments were off 4% from 1994, the previous record year. It was the first decline in trailer shipments since 1991.

Except for the past two years, shipments were well ahead of any other year in history. If the preliminary totals for 1996 hold true, the industry turned out at least 10,000 more trailers last year than any year prior to 1994. The preliminary figures are calculated by adding the individual Census Bureau reports for each month of the year. However, the industry's official "report card" will not be out until this summer when the Census Bureau publishes official totals for 1996.

Based on the most recent report, manufacturers shipped an average of 18,729 complete trailers per month last year, a figure that held relatively steady throughout 1996. As typically is the case, manufacturers had their lowest month of the year in July, shipping 17,330 complete trailers. February was the year's most productive month, with 19,898 trailers shipped.

Manufacturers ended 1996 on a positive note. The industry shipped 18,234 complete trailers in December, up from 17,693 in November. Shipments, however, were down 12%



when compared with a year earlier, the most productive December in history.

In addition to the complete trailers, manufacturers shipped an estimated 173 containers in December (down 71% from December 1995), 1,594 container chassis (down 57%), and 258 dollies and converter gear (off 18%).

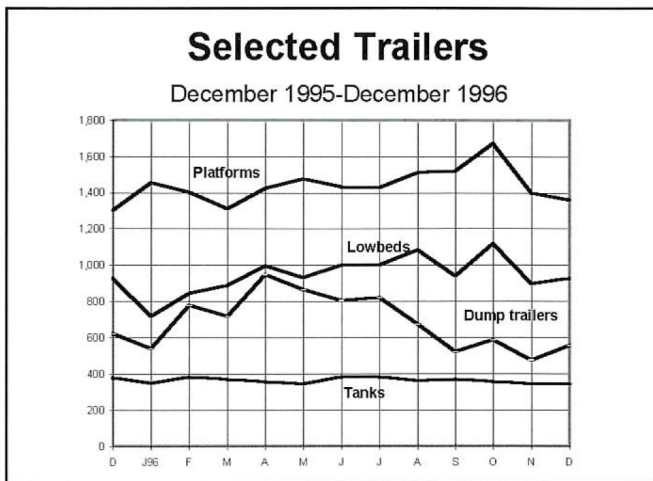
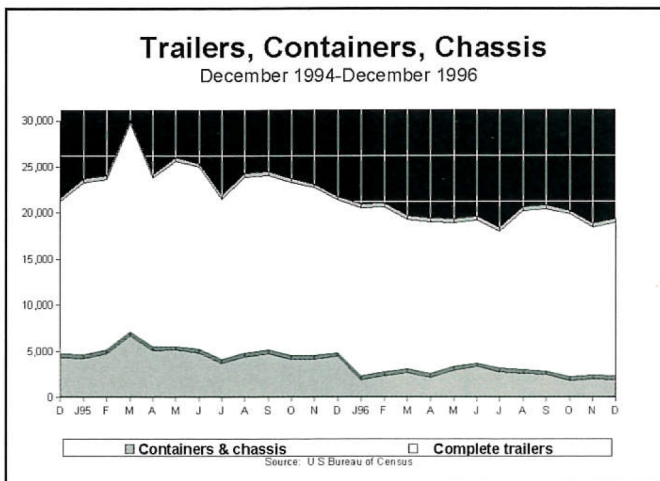
Record Truck Sales

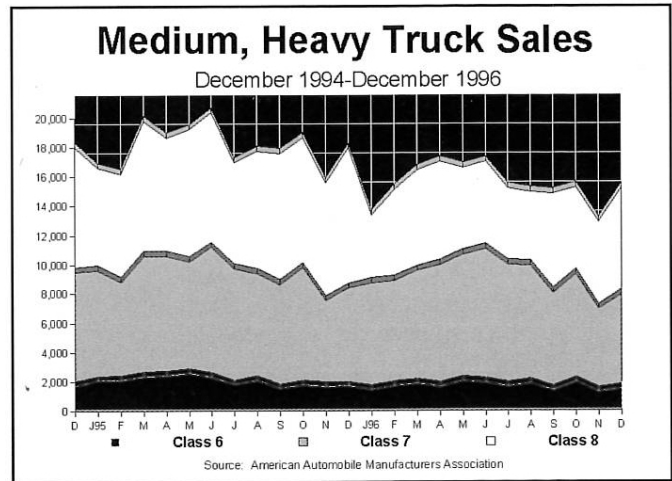
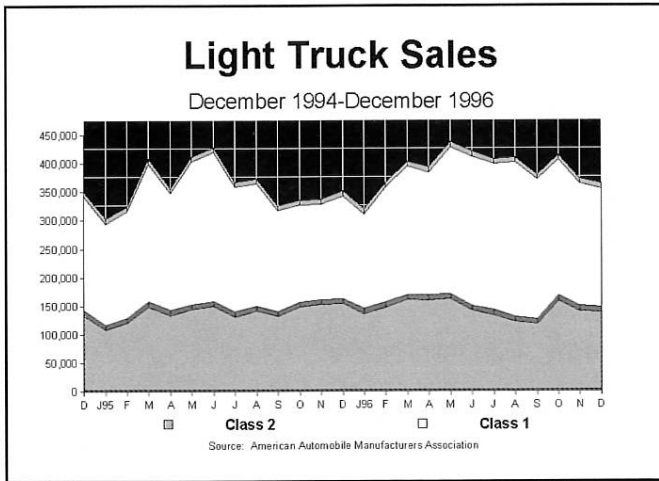
Truck dealers had a record year, selling 6,498,377 trucks during 1996. This represents a 7% increase from 1995, according to figures compiled by the American Automobile Manufacturers Association.

Class 1 trucks (GVW ratings of 6,000 pounds or less) were up 9% compared with 1995. Sales for the year totaled 4,397,889, including 339,555 in December.

Class 2 trucks (GVW ratings of 6,001 to 10,000 pounds) were up 4% for the year, but were down 10% in December. The market bought 1,689,739 Class 2 trucks in 1996 and 136,427 during the last month of the year.

Class 3 trucks (GVW ratings of 10,001 to 14,000 pounds)





1996 Trailer Shipments

(Preliminary Totals)

	Dec 1996	Total 1996	Total 1995	% Change
Complete trailers	18,234	224,753	279,144	-19%
Total vans	14,287	172,789	215,420	-20%
Insulated	2,028	23,018	31,715	-27%
Dropframe	128	2,735	6,481	-58%
Livestock	119	1,164	1,708	-32%
Dry freight	11,442	138,523	167,648	-17%
Steel	151	5,652	4,995	13%
Aluminum	10,318	118,751	152,685	-22%
Less than 30 feet	531	9,714	17,185	-43%
30 feet or longer	9,787	109,037	135,500	-20%
FRP	973	14,120	9,968	42%
Open tops	570	7,349	7,868	-7%
Tanks (total)	342	4,347	5,492	-21%
Flammable liquids	128	1,333	1,675	-20%
Chemical & acid	140	1,636	2,405	-32%
Asphalt	11	288	500	-42%
All other tanks	63	618	912	-32%
Bulk commodity	159	1,403	2,589	-46%
Pole & logging	84	1,022	1,596	-36%
Platforms	1,357	17,382	22,797	-24%
Lowbeds	929	11,356	13,054	-13%
Dump trailers	556	8,285	9,552	-13%
Auto transporters	80	848	892	-5%
All other trailers	440	7,321	7,752	-6%
Containers	173	3,251	7,757	-58%
Container chassis	1,594	24,128	46,979	-49%
Dollies, converter gear	258	2,519	4,601	-45%

Truck-tistics . . .

were up sharply in 1996. The 51,820 Class 3 trucks sold last year were 30% more than the total for the previous year. December sales were up 9% compared with December 1995.

Class 4 trucks (GVW ratings of 14,001 to 16,000 pounds) finished the year up 12%, despite a 23% decline in December. Dealers sold 58,722 Class 4 trucks for the year and 3,824 in December.

Class 6 trucks (GVW ratings of 19,501 to 26,000 pounds) were off 17% for the year, and were down 12% when compared with December 1995. Customers bought 19,403 Class 6 trucks in 1996, including 1,410 in December.

Class 7 trucks (GVW ratings of 26,001 to 33,000 pounds) also edged down for both the year (-3%) and for the month (-6%). Retail purchasers bought 103,528 Class 7 trucks in 1997, of which 7,293 were sold in December.

Class 8 trucks (GVW ratings above 33,000 pounds) were down 16% for both December and all of 1996. Dealers sold 170,009 Class 8 trucks last year, including 14,045 during the last month of the year.

In other areas:

- Intermodal shipments began 1997 slightly ahead of last year's disappointing pace, according to figures compiled by the Association of American Railroads. Through the first five weeks of this year, U S railroads transported 292,415 trailers (up 1.3% compared with the corresponding period of 1996) and 450,460 containers (up 5.6%). Combined, intermodal shipments were up 3.9%

- Industrial production increased 0.8% in December after a similar gain in November, according to the Federal Reserve. The output of non-energy consumer goods, business equipment, and materials advanced sharply. The unseasonably mild weather in December caused a large drop in the output of utilities, reducing the growth rate of overall production by about 0.3 percentage point. At 129.1% of its 1987 average, total industrial production in December was 5.1% higher than in December 1995. □