

Explanation of Searches for FARS Coding of Side Underride Crashes

I have continued to explore how common it is for [FARS](#) (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) records to be coded inaccurately for [fatalities](#) resulting from side underride crashes. I used Google to search for news articles (or, in a few cases, lawsuits) detailing side underride crashes.

Using mostly photos from the news articles, I could determine whether the crashes should be coded as a side underride using NHTSA's definition in their recently-released [crash pamphlet](#): "NHTSA categorizes a crash in which any portion of a passenger vehicle slides under the body of a larger truck or trailer as an underride crash."

The majority of the news articles include clear photos of side underride deaths that occurred after vehicles became lodged under semitrailers. The photo in this article, [Parents, Child Killed in Polk City Crash; 2 Other Children Critical](#), is an example of how easy it is to determine if a side underride occurred. A photo from another crash, [Ambulance workers returning from call killed in I-81 milk tanker crash](#), likewise demonstrates the [inaccuracy](#) of the FARS coding.

Once I located a news article and verified it was a side underride crash, I searched FARS using the [Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool](#) for the corresponding "Case listing" (i.e., record). The FARS records are easily found by querying the database using the date, state, county, and whether the resulting fatality involved a large truck.

Every side underride crash I located in FARS has not been coded correctly. The FARS database incorrectly coded all of these fatal side underride crashes as "No Underride or Override Noted". So far, I'm somewhere around 60+ fatalities that are not coded correctly, demonstrating that FARS significantly undercounts fatalities that resulted from side underride crashes.

Eric Hein

[Father of side underride victim, Riley Hein](#)

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