



Drowsy Driving Prevention

How Fatigue Can Make travel Tragic

What is the Problem?

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2009 730 fatal motor vehicle crashes and 30,000 nonfatal motor vehicle crashes involved drowsy driving.¹ In 2011 the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) reported that 21,253 accidents occurred by trucks, vans, and passenger cars.² Crashes attributed to drowsy driving are more likely to result in injuries and fatalities.³



Who is at Risk?

Those at increased risk for drowsy driving include commercial drivers, persons who work at night or long shifts, drivers with untreated sleep disorders, drivers who use sedating medications, and anyone who does not get adequate sleep.⁴ Adolescent males and first-time parents are also at higher risk.⁵

Prevention Tips

Drowsiness impairs driving skills (even if drivers manage to stay awake) but this can be prevented in order to keep you safe⁶. Keep in mind the following safety tips:

- Drivers should ensure that they get enough sleep (7–9 hours) each night.⁷
- Do not drive when the body is naturally drowsy: between 12 to 6 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.⁸
- Avoid medications which may induce drowsiness. Read medication label to confirm.⁹
- Recognize drowsiness signs: frequent yawning, heavy eyes, and blurred vision.¹⁰
- Switch drivers, if possible. Passengers who recognize drowsiness warning signs should speak up and offer to drive. If necessary demand a driver switch to protect the safety of all passengers.¹¹
- If travelling alone and becoming drowsy, get off the road and rest until no longer tired.¹²



Plan of the Week (POW):

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) conducted a self-reporting questionnaire during 2009–2010 and found that, of 147, 076 respondents, 4.2% (**ALMOST** 6,200 people) reported falling asleep at least once while driving in the last 30 days.¹³ Falling asleep while driving is obviously dangerous, but drowsiness also severely impairs driving skills.¹⁴ **WARNING** signs of a drowsy driver includes: slowed reaction time, being less attentive, and impaired decision-making skills.¹⁵ Get enough rest before beginning a long journey, to keep you and your family safe.

References

- 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12-15 Wheaton A, Chapman D, Presley-Cantrell L. et al. Drowsy driving- 19 states and the District of Columbia, 2009-2010. 2013;61(51);1033-1037.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6151a1.htm>. Accessed 26 September 2013.
- 2 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Data & Statistics.
<http://www.nts.gov/data/index.html>. Accessed 26 September 2013.
- 5 North Carolina Department of Transportation. Drowsy Driving.
<http://www.ncdot.gov/travel/safetytips/#drowsy>. Accessed 26 September 2013.
- 8-11 Air Force Medical Service. Dead Asleep, the Cost of Drowsy Driving.
<http://www.afms.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123351677>. Updated 7 June 2013.
Accessed 26 September 2013.

Other Resources

US Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center – Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS).
<https://safety.army.mil/povmotorcyclesafety/TOOLS/TravelRiskPlanningSystemTRIPS/tabid/630/Default.aspx>

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<http://www.afms.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123351677>

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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