

Stay Awake - Take a Break

Drowsy drivers are dangerous. Sleepiness slows reaction time, decreases awareness, and impairs judgment.

Driving is a demanding task that requires people to be alert, yet thousands of drivers on our roads are drowsy and driving with a serious sleep debt. They are every bit as dangerous as drunk drivers. These facts about sleep may surprise you.

Did You Know ?

- Drinking a cup of coffee or a can of cola will only make you feel more awake for a short time. They are no substitute for actual sleep.
- Sleep deprivation can sometimes lead to "micro-sleeps" of four or five seconds. At 55 mph, you travel 100 yards in those seconds, plenty of time for a serious crash to occur.
- People cannot always control when they fall asleep, particularly if they are sleep-deprived. They also will not be able to tell how long they have been asleep, a very dangerous situation when driving.
- The average adult needs between seven to eight hours of sleep a night. Teenagers need even more sleep.
- Drowsy drivers may begin seeing things on the road that aren't there which can lead to a crash.

Safety Check

- Get enough rest the night before starting a long trip. Plan to drive during your normal waking hours.
- Avoid driving during your "down" times, usually mid-afternoon and between midnight and 6 a.m.
- Ask your passengers to stay awake to make sure you don't nod off.

Warning Signs

- Your eyes close or go out of focus.
- You have trouble keeping your head up.
- You can't stop yawning.
- You have wandering, disconnected thoughts.
- You don't remember driving the last few miles.
- You drift between lanes, tailgate or miss traffic signs.
- You have to jerk the car back into your lane.
- You drift off the road and narrowly miss crashing.

For more information on driver fatigue, contact the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) at 202/452-6005.