

WAKE UP!

to the Risks of Drowsy Driving



Have you ever felt sleepy or caught yourself nodding off when driving? **Drowsy driving can be as dangerous as driving drunk. Just as alcohol can impair driver performance, drowsiness can slow reaction time, impair judgment and increase the risk of a crash.**

Who Is At Risk?

- Anyone can fall asleep when driving. Drivers at highest risk for crashes due to drowsy driving include:
 - commercial truck drivers
 - late night shift workers
 - parents taking care of young children
 - people with untreated sleep disorders
 - young drivers, especially males, under age 26
- Drowsy driving crashes usually involve only one vehicle in which the driver is alone, and the injuries tend to be serious or fatal.

Is Falling Asleep Something You Can Control?

- It's almost impossible to know if you will fall asleep when tired and driving. You can fall asleep and not even know it.
- Turning up the radio, opening the window, or turning on the air conditioner will not help you to stay awake when driving.

What Are the Warning Signs of Drowsiness?

- Repeated yawning
- Driver inattention
- Inability to keep eyes open and head raised
- Not remembering the last few miles driven
- Having wandering or disconnected thoughts
- Drifting out of the lane or hitting rumble strips

If any of these occur, pull into a safe rest area to take a nap or switch drivers.

Before Getting On the Road

- Get enough rest before you drive—most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep.
- Have a passenger to talk to and share the driving.
- Avoid alcohol and sedating medications—check the labels or ask your doctor.
- Plan to take a break at least every two hours or every 100 miles when driving.

If You Feel Tired While Driving

- Pull over and take a 15 to 20 minute nap. Park in an area that is safe—away from traffic and well lit.
- Find a place to sleep for the night.
- Have someone else drive.

Will Caffeine Keep You Alert to Drive?

- Coffee, soda and other drinks with caffeine can help overcome drowsiness. However, it takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to be effective and the relief is only short-term.
- Consuming caffeine before taking a short nap could help you get the benefits of both. Keep in mind that caffeine won't have much effect on people who take it regularly.

Useful Websites

New York State Department of Health
www.nyhealth.gov/

New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee
www.nysgtsc.state.ny.us/drow-ndx.htm

National Sleep Foundation www.sleepfoundation.org or
www.drowsydriving.org

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