

TAKE 5

Driving Fatigue Prevention

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Driver fatigue mimics alcohol impairment and compromises drivers' alertness, decision making, and reaction times, making driving while drowsy a dangerous risk on the road. According to the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#), 37% of U.S. workers get less than the recommended minimum of seven hours of sleep. Workers whose job involves long hours of driving, shiftwork, or a long commute, are at increased risk of driving fatigue.



Factors

Factors in driving fatigue include:

- lack of sleep due to long or irregular shift work hours;
- poor sleep quality;
- driving during normal sleeping hours (midnight to 6 am);
- driving on rural roads and highways; and
- consuming alcohol or taking medications that can cause drowsiness.



Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of driver fatigue include:

- burning or a heavy sensation in the eyes, an inability to focus, or frequent blinking;
- muscle twitching;
- back tension;
- yawning;
- wandering or disconnected thoughts, including difficulty remembering the past few miles driven;
- missing an exit, drifting in a lane, crossing roadway lines, or hitting a rumble strip on the side of the road;
- heavy, tingly, or a numb sensation in limbs; and
- shallow breathing.



Prevention

Driving requires motorists to be alert, especially on long road trips. Take these steps to prevent driver fatigue and its harmful effects:

- Get enough sleep. Most adults need seven to eight hours per night.
- Start trips as early in the day as possible.
- Avoid long nighttime drives.
- Avoid driving during normal sleeping hours.
- Avoid driving alone if possible.
- Take public transit or use ride-sharing companies if possible.
- Keep trips to reasonable distances.
- Watch for road and traffic signs.
- Before driving, eat light rather than heavy meals.
- Stop to eat snacks or light meals.
- Limit coffee to one or two cups. The effects of coffee or energy drinks last only a short time.
- Take breaks every two hours or 100 miles.
- On a break, get out of the vehicle and walk, jog, or stretch.
- Keep the driver's area cool and well ventilated.
- Vary driving speeds.
- Sing or listen to the radio to keep alert.
- Avoid alcohol and medications that can cause drowsiness.
- Drive with an erect posture, with legs at a 45-degree angle.
- Pull over at a rest stop or other safe place and take a 20-minute nap (any longer will make you feel groggy).
- Plan ahead for time changes in the spring and fall to adjust to the sleep and daylight hour differences.

Safety Violations Hotline

1-800-452-9595

safetyhotline@tdi.texas.gov

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