



Driving Fatigue Prevention

Driver fatigue mimics alcohol impairment and compromises drivers' alertness, decision making, and reaction times – making driving while drowsy a dangerous risk on the road.

Factors in employees' driver 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
- taking medications that can make you drowsy or consuming alcohol before driving.



Signs and symptoms of driver fatigue include:

- burning or heavy sensation in the eyes, 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 numb sensation in limbs; and;
- shallow breathing.

Driving for work requires you 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.

- Drink one to two cups of coffee. The effects of coffee or energy drinks last only a short time. If you are seriously sleep-deprived, you may experience “micro-sleeps” (brief, four- or five-second losses of consciousness) that, at 55 mph, would allow enough time to travel down the road for 100 yards and cause a crash.
- 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 your driving speed.
- Sing or listen to the radio to keep alert.
- Avoid alcohol and any medications that might 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.

This document was produced by the Division of Workers’ Compensation (DWC) and is considered accurate at the time of publication.

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