

Who is Most at Risk?

► Young People ◀

Sleep-related crashes are most common in young people, who tend to stay up late, sleep too little, and drive at night.

► Shift Workers ◀

Studies suggest that 20-30% of those with non-traditional work schedules have had a fatigue-related crash within the last year.

► Commercial Drivers ◀

In addition to the high number of miles driven each year, many truck drivers may drive during the night when the body is the sleepiest.

► All Drivers Who Are: ◀

- sleep-deprived or fatigued
- driving long distances without rest breaks
- driving through the night, the early afternoon, or at other times when they are normally asleep
- taking medication that increases sleepiness or drinking alcohol
- driving alone
- driving on long, rural, boring roads
- frequent travelers (e.g., business travelers)

For further information, please contact:

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Check out our safety web site at:
www.safety.gmu.edu

For local information, please contact:

Your local Police Department
or Sheriff's Office

Northern Virginia:

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Driving While Drowsy



Are you at risk?

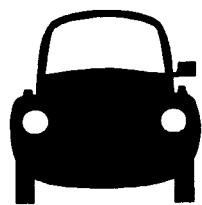
According to the National Sleep Foundation, in the past century Americans have reduced their average time asleep by 20% and, in the past 25 years, added a month to their average annual work/commute time. It's no wonder more people are driving drowsy than ever before.



Sleep need and patterns are controlled by an internal biological "clock" that is located in the brain. Most people's "clocks" run on a cycle of about 24

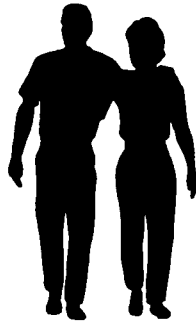
hours and seem to "run down" between the hours of 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. and between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Many people know the dangers of *drinking* and driving, but few realize that driving *drowsy* can be just as dangerous. Sleepiness slows reaction time, decreases awareness, and impairs judgment, just like drugs or alcohol. And, just like drugs and alcohol, sleepiness can contribute to a crash.



The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that approximately 100,000 police-reported crashes annually (about 1.5% of all crashes) involve drowsiness/fatigue as a principal cause.

According to a 1999 poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation:



40%

of adults report feeling so sleepy during the day that it interferes with their daily activities.

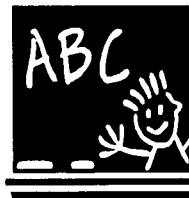
62%

of adults say they have driven while drowsy.

27%

of adults admitted they have fallen asleep behind the wheel.

60%



of children complained of feeling tired during the day and 15% admitted to falling asleep in school.

Danger Signals for Drowsy Drivers:

- Your eyes close or go out of focus by themselves.
- You have trouble keeping your head up.
- You can not stop yawning.
- You have wandering, disconnected thoughts.
- You do not remember driving the last few miles.
- You drift between lanes, tailgate, or miss traffic signs.
- You keep jerking the car back into the lane.
- You have drifted off the road and narrowly missed crashing.



What are Effective Countermeasures?

Before leaving on a trip:

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Plan to drive long trips with a companion.
- Avoid alcohol and medications that may impair performance.

Once driving, motorists should:

- Look for the warning signs of fatigue.
- Respond to symptoms of fatigue by finding a safe place to stop for a break.
- Pull off into a safe area away from traffic and take a brief nap (15 to 45 minutes) if tired.
- Take a break every 2 hours or every 100 miles to get some exercise or take a quick nap.
- Be alert and look for other drivers who might be driving drowsy.

■ *Never count on the radio, open window, the consumption of caffeine, or other "tricks" to keep you awake.* ■