



Everyone Goes Home "SAFE"!

Driving with Fatigue

WORK Outage (Long Work Hours + Lack of Rest + Poor Diet) = High Risk

You've more than likely witnessed a child or adult fall asleep. For a period of time they are "drifting off" to sleep, they appear and behave "drowsy" and then they suddenly "fall" asleep, we sometimes say they went "out, like a light".

No one is aware of the exact moment of their own sleep onset, it occurs in a split second. Somewhere between being awake and being a sleep is this so called "drowsy" state.

Now, imagine what this could mean if you're behind the wheel of a car. At one moment you're aware of feeling drowsy and in a split second you can be asleep, completely unaware of this incredibly dangerous situation.

The state of drowsiness itself is a significant impairment while driving and has been shown in several studies to be as dangerous as driving drunk. In driving performance testing, 17 hours of sustained wakefulness was equivalent to driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.05%.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that each year drowsy driving results in 1,550 deaths and 71,000 injuries with 55% of these crashes involving drivers 25yo and younger. In fact, the most at risk group are young men ages 19 years to 26 years.

Drowsiness causes: slow reaction times, impaired judgment and vision, decline in

attention, decreased alertness, increased moodiness and aggressive behavior, problems with processing information and short term memory.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, signs of drowsiness while driving may include:

- Turning up the radio or rolling down the window
- Impaired reaction time and judgment
- Decreased performance, vigilance and motivation
- Trouble focusing, keeping your eyes open or your head up
- Daydreaming and wandering thoughts
- Yawning or rubbing your eyes repeatedly
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating and missing signs or exits
- Feeling restless, irritable or aggressive

The best remedy for avoiding drowsy driving is getting enough sleep, which means 7-9 hours of good quality sleep for most adults; however, most people do not get enough sleep.

According to the 2002 Sleep in America poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, nearly 40% of adults sleep less than 7 hours a night.

Our personal demands and lifestyle choices are in large part responsible for this trend. But our biggest problem is really our own ignorance about the importance of sleep and the impact that it has on every aspect of our lives.

Simply put, we don't value sleep; we don't appreciate or respect our need for sleep. It is what we do when the effects of our caffeine filled day cannot keep us awake any longer. It



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is a time when we can't text, twitter, talk on the phone or be entertained.

How much sleep is enough sleep will vary from person to person and changes as we age but an individual's sleep requirement stays consistent throughout their adult life.

Most of us need 7-9 hours of sleep at night to feel rested throughout the day. If every night you deprive yourself of an hour of sleep you create a sleep debt and this lost sleep accumulates progressively over time. This is what leads to sleep deprivation and drowsiness. The larger the sleep debt, the greater the tendency to feel drowsy and fall asleep.

In order to avoid the pressure for sleep we call drowsiness, your sleep debt must be zero! So try every day to give your body the sleep it needs especially if driving for extended lengths of time and distance. Avoid driving alone on long trips and take turns driving. Stop driving if you feel drowsy, pull off the road and take a nap, this is one circumstance when caffeine is recommended to help you stay awake.

Contrary to popular belief, caffeine is not a substitute for sleep but can improve alertness especially when combined with a nap.

No one actually knows for sure why we sleep; it is one of Sciences great frontiers. Sleep affects every part of our life including health, safety, mood, learning, appearance, relationships and productivity.

All animals sleep, and we know a lot about what happens when you deprive human beings or other animals of sleep, but why this

is essential for life is actually not well understood.

To sum up, Sleep is critical to our ability to stay awake and alert. Sleeping 7-9 hours a night can help us keep our sleep debt low and improve on our health and safety. Driving when drowsy is extremely dangerous as it impairs our judgment and puts the driver and those around us at risk for injury and even death.