



Drowsy Driving

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According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) surveys, half of Americans consistently report that they have driven drowsy and approximately 20% admit that they have actually fallen asleep at the wheel in the previous year.

Did You Know:

- 100,000 crashes each year are caused by fatigued drivers?
- Each year drowsy driving crashes result in at least 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses?
- 55% of drowsy driving crashes are caused by drivers less than 25 years old?
- Being awake for 18 hours is equal to a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08%, which in every state is the legal limit for driving under the influence (DUI) and leaves you at equal risk for a crash?

Here are some signs that should tell a driver to stop and rest:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, or heavy eyelids
- Daydreaming; wandering/disconnected thoughts
- Trouble remembering the last few miles driven; missing exits or traffic signs
- Yawning repeatedly or rubbing your eyes
- Trouble keeping your head up
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, or hitting a shoulder rumble strip
- Feeling restless and irritable

I have a sleep disorder and have been and can be a drowsy driver. I have learned from experience the importance of knowing the signs of drowsiness and when I need to pull off to rest sometimes for as little as a few minutes, sometimes a short nap; or if I have another driver – asking them to drive. I have even pulled off within a couple miles of my home – it may seem silly to some, but well worth it to me. I get home safely and without endangering others. *Reference* (<http://www.esc.org/wp-content/uploads/January-2014.pdf>)

Drowsy Driving – Who's Most at Risk?

Anyone who drives is at risk of falling asleep at the wheel, but some groups of people are more at risk than others. They include:

- **Young drivers** – Combining inexperience with sleepiness and a tendency to drive at night puts young people at risk, especially males aged 16-25 years.
- **Shift workers and people working long hours** – People who work night shifts, rotating shifts, double shifts or work more than one job have a six-fold increase in drowsy driving crashes.
- **Commercial drivers** – Those who drive a high number of miles and drive at night are at significantly higher risk for fall-asleep crashes. Commercial drivers have also been found to be at a high risk for sleep disorders.
- **People with untreated sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)** – People with untreated OSA are up to seven times more likely to have a drowsy driving crash. For some people insomnia can increase fatigue.
- **Business travelers** – Frequent travelers who may be suffering from jet lag and crossing time zones, spending long hours behind the wheel or getting too little sleep. <http://drowsydriving.org>