

Fatigue is the result of physical or mental exertion that impairs performance. Driver fatigue may be due to a lack of adequate sleep, extended work hours, strenuous work or non-work activities, or a combination of other factors. The Large Truck Crash Causation Study (LTCCS) reported that 13 percent of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers were considered to have been fatigued at the time of their crash.

TIP #1: GET ENOUGH SLEEP BEFORE GETTING BEHIND THE WHEEL

Be sure to get an adequate amount of sleep each night. If possible, do not drive while your body is naturally drowsy, between the hours of 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Driver drowsiness may impair a driver's response time to potential hazards, increasing the chances of being in a crash. If you do become drowsy while driving, be sure to choose a safe place to pull over and rest.

Did You Know? A study by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) found that driver alertness was related to "time-of-day" more so than "time-on-task." Most people are less alert at night, especially after midnight. This drowsiness may be enhanced if you have been on the road for an extended period of time.

TIP #2: MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET

Skipping meals or eating at irregular times may lead to fatigue and/or food cravings. Also, going to bed with an empty stomach or immediately after a heavy meal can interfere with sleep. A light snack before bed may help you achieve more restful sleep. Remember that if you are not well-rested, induced fatigue may cause slow reaction time, reduced attention, memory lapses, lack of awareness, mood changes, and reduced judgment ability.

Did you Know? A recent study conducted on the sleeping and driving habits of CMV drivers concluded that an unhealthy lifestyle, long working hours, and sleeping problems were the main causes of drivers falling asleep while driving.

TIP #3: TAKE A NAP

If possible, you should take a nap when feeling drowsy or less alert. Naps should last a minimum of 10 minutes, but ideally a nap should last up to 45 minutes. Allow at least 15 minutes after waking to fully recover before starting to drive.

Did you know? Short naps are more effective at restoring energy levels than coffee.

TIP #4: AVOID MEDICATION THAT MAY INDUCE DROWSINESS

Avoid medications that may make you drowsy if you plan to get behind the wheel. Most drowsiness-inducing medications include a warning label indicating that you should not operate

vehicles or machinery during use. Some of the most common medicines that may make you drowsy are: tranquilizers, sleeping pills, allergy medicines and cold medicines.

Did You Know? Cold pills are one of the most common medicines that may make you drowsy. If you must drive with a cold, it is safer to suffer from the cold than drive under the effects of the medicine.

TIP #5: RECOGNIZE THE SIGNALS AND DANGERS OF DROWSINESS

Pay attention: Indicators of drowsiness include: frequent yawning, heavy eyes, and blurred vision.

Did You Know? Research has indicated that being awake for 18 hours is comparable to having a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent, which is legally intoxicated and leaves you at equal risk for a crash.

TIP #6: DO NOT RELY ON "ALERTNESS TRICKS" TO KEEP YOU AWAKE

Behaviors such as smoking, turning up the radio, drinking coffee, opening the window, and other "alertness tricks" are not real cures for drowsiness and may give you a false sense of security.

Did You Know? Rolling the window down or turning the radio up may help you feel more alert for an instant, but these are not effective ways to maintain an acceptable level of alertness.