



Fatigued Driving

What is Fatigued Driving?

Fatigued driving is best explained as driving when you are tired or sleepy. Driving when you are fatigued has serious consequences. First, fatigue impairs your ability to safely perform even basic-driving tasks. It decreases reaction time, affects judgment, and can result in erratic-driving behavior.

What Causes Fatigue?

The time of day is one factor that contributes to fatigue. Early morning, after lunch and just after sunset are times to watch for fatigue. The most dangerous time is in the witching hours between midnight and six in the morning. It is during these hours that most fatigue-related crashes occur.

Irregular sleep patterns or sleep disorders also can result in fatigue. Many of us do not take sleep seriously. In fact, some consider it a waste of time. The average adult requires from 6 ½ to 8 ½ hours of sleep per day.

Some short-term relief may be gained from varying seat position and fresh air, but they are short-lived and not very effective. Exercising by walking around your car is only temporary and may not last more than a few minutes. If you have a passenger, ask him or her to remain awake and talk to you to keep your mind active. If your passenger sleeps while you drive, you are more likely to fall asleep yourself. Whenever possible, avoid driving during your normal sleep time. Your body has its own cycle and it may be stronger than your will to stay awake.

It's not wise to depend on high-caffeine drinks such as coffee or soda. Avoid the use of stimulants such as caffeine pills or "no-doze." These stimulants may not be very effective and are also unpredictable. When they wear off, you could go from being wide-awake to being fast asleep without warning.

Avoid drinking alcohol or eating large, heavy meals. They may make you sleepier.

Early mornings and late nights at work also increase the risk of fatigue. If you are frequently deprived of adequate rest, the effects continue to accumulate. That is why towards the end of a long work week, you tend to feel tired and are more likely to suffer from driving fatigue, especially late Friday night and early Saturday morning.

Colds can also cause driver fatigue. The symptoms of a cold may leave you tired and feeling "run down." Medications you take for the cold may have side effects that can leave you feeling drowsy.

When taking prescription drugs, **ALWAYS** consult the pharmacist for drug side effects and interaction warnings.

Remember, even over-the-counter cold remedies can cause drowsiness. Make sure you read and understand all medicine warning labels. Remember, **NEVER** mix alcohol with any medication.



What are the Warning Signs?

There are several warning signs of fatigue; however, we often don't understand them or worse yet, choose to ignore them. Some of the warning signs include:

- Feeling sleepy or tired
- Being unaware of your environment or not always knowing where you are
- Erratic driving similar to drunk driving
- Unable to get comfortable
- Tired or burning eyes
- Rubbing your neck or face to wake up
- Driving off the shoulder or crossing the center line

Any of these symptoms may result in loss of vehicle control.

The Problem

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates falling asleep while driving is responsible for at least 100,000 automobile crashes, 40,000 injuries, and 1,550 fatalities each year. About half of all traffic fatalities occur at night. When you consider the miles driven at night, that rate is closer to four times as high as for daytime driving.

The Solution

The only reliable way to combat fatigue is with proper rest. Even a short nap can do wonders to help fight fatigue. When planning a trip, always leave extra time in case you become tired and need to stop and rest.

When Reporting Suspected Fatigued or Drunk Drivers

Be sure and note the following:

- Location — street, highway, city, county
- Vehicle description, including license plate, vehicle color, make, model and direction of travel
- Elapsed time from observing vehicle
- Violation or activity observed
- Your name, location and call-back number



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