Introduction

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that each year at least 100,000 police-reported crashes are the direct result of driver fatigue. This results in an estimated 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries, and $12.5 billion in monetary losses.

Warning Signs

- 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. Nodding off while driving
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, or hitting a shoulder rumble strip
- Feeling restless and irritable

Preventative Measures

- Get adequate sleep—most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep to maintain proper alertness.
- If emergency or unexpected travel is required, consider delaying the travel until after adequate sleep provided the severity or necessity of the travel does not warrant immediate response.
- Set a realistic goal for the number of miles that can be safely driven each day.
- Avoid taking medications that cause drowsiness such as over-the-counter medications for allergies, cough, nausea, or upset stomachs upset.
- Plan rest stops and pay attention to other driver behavior during the late night, early morning and mid-afternoon hours when drowsy driving crashes are most likely to occur.
- Schedule proper breaks—about every 100 miles or 2 hours during long trips.
- Arrange for a travel companion—someone to talk with and share the driving.
- If you feel drowsy, stop driving, check into a hotel for the night.
- Drink a caffeinated beverage
  - Coffee or another type of caffeine drink can promote short-term alertness, if needed. Be aware that it takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream. Remember, caffeine only offers short-term benefits and is not a replacement for a good night’s sleep.
Develop a crew transportation plan. Contract with a transportation service or assign well rested personnel to shuttle workers to and from the worksite each day/operational period if working 10-hour or greater shifts and hotels/camps are greater than 30-45 minutes away.

Restrictions

The EPA Driving Guideline places limits on the amount of time employees (and contractors operating government vehicles) are allowed to drive because driver fatigue results in reduced alertness and productivity and is a risk factor for motor vehicle accidents. Vehicle operators must comply with the following work/rest guidelines except during the first 24 hours of emergency driving:

- Drive only if there has been at least 8 consecutive hours of off-duty time before beginning a work shift. Riding in a vehicle is considered on-duty time.
- Work and drive no more than 14 hours in a 24-hour period (includes travel time to/from lodging).
- Drive no more than 11 hours per driver during a work shift. If another eligible driver is present, that individual may take over for the driver and operate the vehicle until he/she has reached the 14-hour work shift limit.
- Drive no more than 4 hours without a rest stop of at least 15 minutes. If operating a vehicle carrying 15 or more passengers, stop for at least 15 minutes every two hours.

Permissible driving hours may need to be adjusted when aggravating factors/circumstances can increase driver fatigue (e.g., adverse weather, traffic congestion, doing exhausting work on site or working on site during periods of high heat stress).

References and Additional Guidance

- National Sleep Foundation Drowsy Driving Program - [http://drowsydriving.org](http://drowsydriving.org)