

Driver Fatigue

Objective: To improve recognition of the common symptoms of driver fatigue and to provide tips for drowsy driving prevention

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that driver drowsiness and fatigue is one of the **main causes** of police-reported road crashes each year. Precautions are needed from both employees and employers to assure safety on the road.



Symptoms of Driver Fatigue

- A burning sensation in the eyes
- Eyelids feeling heavy
- Twitching or muscle tension
- Wandering, disconnected thoughts
- Sensations in limbs (e.g., a feeling of heaviness, light tingling, or numbness)

Contributing Factors

- Long shifts
- Many accumulative days of long shifts
- The time of day
- Changes in the time of work that disrupt the body's "internal clock"
- Scheduling that does not allow for sufficient rest and recovery between shifts
- Human factors, such as age, physical fitness, and health status
- The consumption of heavy meals or insufficient nutrition
- The use of medications that cause drowsiness, such as cold or allergy medicines

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Employee Solutions

- **Healthy sleep patterns:** Get plenty of rest.
- **Proper nutrition:** Eat a well-balanced and healthy diet. Avoid heavy and greasy foods.
- **Regular exercise:** Maintain a balanced program to improve stamina.
- **Fitness:** Excessive weight is taxing to the body and may increase fatigue. Establish a weight control plan that includes proper diet and exercise.
- **Effective sleeping environment:** Make your sleep environment comfortable, e.g., reduce noise and lights and adjust the temperature and ventilation to fit your needs.
- **Relaxation time:** Schedule time to relax and do things you enjoy.
- **No smoking:** Nicotine creates dependency and is incompatible with good health.
- **Limited caffeine intake:** Caffeine is a drug that may over-stimulate the body and mind, interfering with sleep and increasing anxiety levels.
- **Limited alcoholic beverages:** Alcohol depresses bodily functions, causing lethargy and fatigue. Consumption close to bedtime can disturb sleep and cause emotional distress.

Employer Responsibilities

- Assure regular ride-alongs and on-the-road assessments.
- Provide a means of regular communication or contact.
- Allow time for sleep, assuring they can get at least 7 hours of continuous sleep per 24 hours.
- Operate flexible schedules, allowing for short breaks or discretionary sleep.
- Stick to a schedule, minimizing irregular or unfamiliar work shifts.
- Provide drivers sufficient notice of work, allowing them time to plan for adequate rest.
- When changing between night and day shifts, allow time for drivers to alter sleep patterns.
- When drivers return from leave, give them time to adapt and minimize night schedules.
- Provide training for drivers, supervisors, schedulers, and any employee whose actions may affect road safety on fatigue causes and controls.

Safety Brief



Driver Fatigue

This form documents that the training specified above was presented to the listed participants. By signing below, each participant acknowledges receiving this training.

Organization: _____ Date: _____

Trainer: _____ Trainer's Signature: _____

Class Participants:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

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