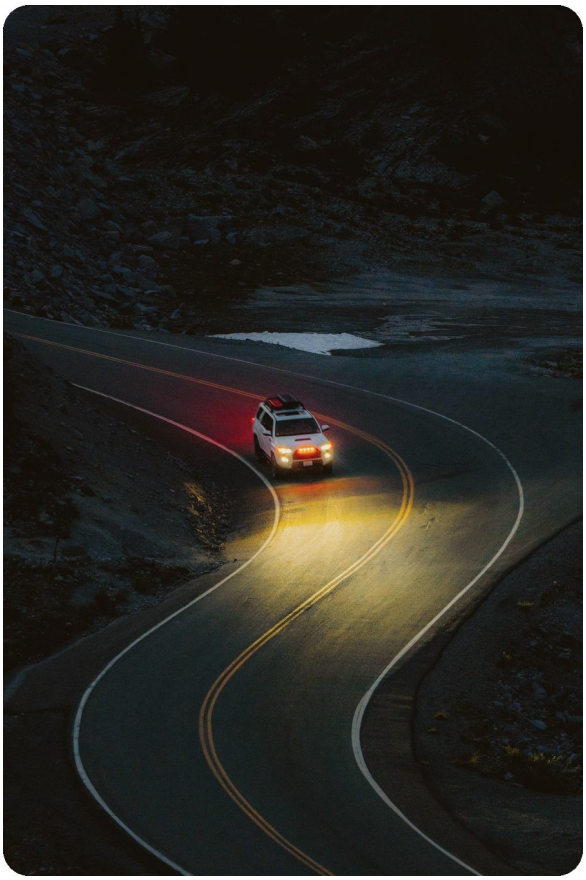


SAFETY BRIEF · WEEK 45

Driving at Night

As we 'fall back' to shorter days, take extra care on the road.

Shorter days, fatigue, compromised night vision, rush hour and impaired drivers are some of the risks we face when driving at night. These risks become especially pronounced moving into the weekend, with fatal crashes peaking on Saturday nights, according to NSC analysis of NHTSA data.

When Daylight Saving Time ends – for 2026, that's 2 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 1 – many people will find themselves spending more time driving in the dark. Depth perception, color recognition and peripheral vision can be compromised in the dark, and the glare of headlights from an oncoming vehicle can temporarily blind a driver.

Even with high-beam headlights on, visibility is limited to about 500 feet (250 feet for normal headlights), creating less time to react to something in the road, especially at higher speeds.

What should you do to combat darkness?

- Aim your headlights correctly, and make sure they're clean
- Dim your dashboard
- Look away from oncoming lights
- If you wear glasses, make sure they're anti-reflective
- Clean the windshield to eliminate streaks
- Slow down to compensate for limited visibility and reduced stopping time

Compromised Night Vision

Night vision is the ability to see well in low-light conditions. As we age, we have greater difficulty seeing at night. A 50-year-old driver may need twice as much light to see as well as a 30-year-old. At age 60 and older, driving can become even more difficult, according to the American Optometric Association. Some older drivers also may have compromised vision due to cataracts and degenerative eye diseases.

The AOA recommends older drivers:

- Have annual vision exams
- Reduce speed
- Take a driving course; even experienced drivers can benefit from a refresher, and some of the rules have probably changed

- Minimize distractions, like talking with passengers or listening to the radio
- Check with your doctor about side effects of prescription drugs
- Limit driving to daytime hours if necessary

Fatigue

A National Sleep Foundation poll says 60% of adults have driven while they were tired, and another 37%, or 103 million people, have fallen asleep at the wheel. Of those, 13% say they fall asleep while driving at least once a month, and 4% say they have caused a crash by falling asleep while driving. The reasons are many – shift work, lack of quality sleep, long work hours, sleep disorders – and it doesn't only happen on lengthy trips.

NHTSA reports that 100,000 police-reported crashes are a result of driver fatigue. Most crashes or near-misses happen at the times you would expect drivers to be tired: 4 to 6 a.m., midnight to 2 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m., according to NSF.

Drowsy driving puts everyone on the road at risk. Losing two hours of sleep has the same effect on driving as having three beers, and tired drivers are three times more likely to be in a car crash.

The National Sleep Foundation offers this advice:

- Get seven or more hours of sleep a night
- Don't drive if you've been awake for 16 hours or more
- Stop every two hours to rest
- Pull over and take a nap if you're drowsy
- Travel during times you are normally awake

Rush Hour

Evening rush hour (between 4 and 7 p.m. weekdays) is a dangerous time to drive due to crowded roadways and drivers eager to get home after work. In winter, it's dark during rush hour, compounding an already dangerous driving situation.

How can you make it home safely during rush hour?

- Don't be an impatient driver; slow down
- Stay in your lane and beware of drivers who dart from lane to lane
- Even though the route may be familiar, don't go on autopilot; stay alert
- In unfamiliar areas, consult a map before you go and memorize your route
- Don't touch your phone, eat, drink or do other things that are distracting

Impaired Drivers

Nearly 30 people die every day in crashes that involve a driver impaired by alcohol, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drivers impaired by prescription medicines and other drugs increase that number significantly. Impaired drivers are most frequently on the road after dark – particularly between midnight and 3 a.m. on weekends.

While drunk driving has declined by about one-third since 2015, the number of drivers under the influence of drugs has increased. Between 2018 and 2019, 22% of drivers tested positive for a drug that would cause impairment,

according to a roadside survey conducted by NHTSA. NHTSA also found that the prevalence of THC (found in marijuana) among drivers on weekend nights increased 48% since 2019, from 8.6% of drivers to 12.6%. Many states have not yet updated their impaired driving laws to address this growing problem.

STAY ALERT, STAY ALIVE

While we do only one quarter of our driving at night, 50% of traffic deaths happen at night. Whether the road is familiar or not, driving at night is always more dangerous. By taking some extra precautions, we can all help reduce these numbers.

TRAINING SIGN-IN SHEET

Driving at Night

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 _____

NAME	SIGNATURE
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