

# Tool Box Talk #2 Driver Fatigue on the job:


## Driver Fatigue on the Job



Whatever the source – lack of or poor-quality sleep, long hours of work or driving, shift work, stress, or sleep disorders – fatigue affects your ability to drive safely. Driver fatigue is a major workplace safety risk. The good news: a fatigue risk management system can help employers and workers to reduce the risks of driver fatigue.

- As many as one in five fatal crashes in the general population involve driver fatigue.<sup>1</sup>
- Companies use an FRMS to promote alertness among workers, identify fatigue-prone tasks, and lessen fatigue and its potential consequences.<sup>2</sup>
- After 17 consecutive hours awake, impairment is equivalent to having a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .05. After 24 hours awake, impairment is equivalent to a BAC of .10.<sup>3</sup>
- A survey of the U.S. workforce found that 37% of workers got less than the recommended minimum of 7 hours of sleep.<sup>4</sup>
- Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each day.<sup>5</sup>

# Employers: How can you prevent driver fatigue on the job?

- Use a fatigue risk management system (FRMS) to promote alertness among workers, identify fatigue-prone tasks, and lessen fatigue and its potential consequences.<sup>2</sup> [Here's what you need to know before starting an FRMS and how to manage fatigue using the fatigue-risk chain.](#)
- Set policies for maximum numbers of overtime hours and consecutive shifts.
- Monitor compliance with [federal hours-of-service regulations](#)  for drivers covered by them.
- Ensure sufficient staffing levels across operations, factoring in the inevitable absences that occur due to vacation days, sickness, and turnover.
- Implement a workplace sleep disorder screening/management program.
- Provide worker training on sleep health and fatigue management.
- Allow for rest breaks and napping during extended work shifts.
- Give supervisors and workers fatigue-symptom checklists and encourage self-reporting.
- Encourage peer monitoring of fatigue symptoms among co-workers.
- During incident investigations, collect data on sleep history of workers involved, hours worked leading up to the incident, time of day, and hours of driving.
- Review data from in-vehicle monitoring technologies to detect signs of possible fatigue episodes, such as lane departures.
- Consider using physiological measurement (e.g., wearables such as instrumented wristbands and sunglasses) to monitor driver fatigue.
- Train incident investigators to assess the role of fatigue in incidents and near-miss incidents.
- Communicate the following to workers:
  - Get enough sleep (7-9 hours each day). If fatigue persists after adequate sleep, get screened for health problems that may be affecting your sleep, such as sleep apnea.
  - If you feel fatigued while driving: pull over, drink a cup of coffee, and take a 15-30 minute nap before continuing (research shows it works!).

## **Workers: How can you prevent driver fatigue on the job?**

- Plan your off-duty activities to allow enough time for adequate sleep.
- Get enough sleep (7-9 hours each day). If fatigue persists after adequate sleep, get screened for health problems that may be affecting your sleep, such as sleep apnea.
- Create a sleeping environment that helps you sleep well: a dark, quiet, cool room with no electronics.
- If you feel fatigued while driving: pull over, drink a cup of coffee, and take a 15-30 minute nap before continuing. The effects are only temporary – the only “cure” for fatigue is sleep.
- Watch yourself and your peers for fatigue-related symptoms.
- Report instances of fatigue in yourself and others to your direct supervisor, who can help to determine the safest course of action.
- Speak honestly if you are questioned about a fatigue-related incident. Fatigue is a normal biological response – it is not a reflection of how well you do your job.