

Drowsy Driving

This section addresses health and safety issues pertaining to operating a motor vehicle while sleep deprived.

Overview

Operating a motor vehicle while tired or drowsy presents serious health and safety risks. According to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration an estimated 100,000 of reported crashes occur as a result of drowsiness. Recent research also reveals that a driver that is awake in excess of 18 hours produces the same effects as a driver that is legally drunk. The U.S. Department of Transportation's 49 CFR Part 395, Hours of Service regulations, limit commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver's hours of operation.

Signs of Sleep Deprivation

- The feeling of "heavy eyelids"
- Difficulty focusing vision
- Impaired concentration
- Missing road signs or signals
- Repeated yawning or excessive blinking
- Drifting into other lanes or off the road
- Irritability or jumpiness

Prevention

Many of the common thought techniques to prevent falling asleep at the wheel (*i.e. loud music, opened windows*) have been proven to be ineffective. To proactively prevent driving while drowsy, driver should sleep a minimum of 7 hours prior to operating a motor vehicle. If a driver has difficulties staying awake and alert pull over immediately, it has been proven that a 20 minute nap is enough to restore a driver's alertness and abilities.