

The Dangers of Drowsy Driving

Drowsy driving is a serious concern, as an estimated 20% of motor vehicle crashes are related to drowsy driving, according to a 2023 National Sleep Foundation survey [1]. Studies show that 17 consecutive hours awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.05 [2]. A person with a BAC of this level is considered legally impaired in New York State. Driving in this state is dangerous to the driver and others on the road. Protect your employees by preventing fatigue where possible and helping them recognize the signs of drowsiness.

Fatigue can impact driving in several ways, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) [3]. Drivers can:

- Nod off
- React more slowly to changing road conditions, other drivers, or pedestrians
- Make poor decisions
- Drift from their lane
- Experience tunnel vision (when you lose sense of what's going on in the periphery)
- Experience microsleeps (brief sleep episodes lasting from a fraction of a second up to 30 seconds)
- Forget the last few miles you drove

There are many ways to prevent this dangerous problem. Consider these tips to protect employees from accidents.

- Use a fatigue risk management system (FRMS) [4]
- Create policies on maximum consecutive shifts and overtime hours, provide training on fatigue, and ensure sufficient staffing [5]
- Get enough sleep [6]
- Maintain a healthy diet [7]
- Take a nap when possible [8]
- Check medication labels for drowsiness [9]
- Stay vigilant of signs of drowsiness like drifting lanes, missing road signs or turns, frequent yawns, or difficulty keeping eyes open [10]

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Driving while drowsy can lead to drifting lanes, poor decision-making, and a slower reaction time. This can result in serious harm to the driver and those around them. Safeguard employees by utilizing a fatigue risk management system, prioritizing training, and emphasizing the importance of sleep. As always, the Comp Alliance's goal is to return employees home in the same condition they arrived at work. If you have additional questions, contact Robert Blaisdell, Director of Loss Control, at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com.

References

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