



DRIVER FATIGUE

Fatigue is a **major safety concern** in many fields, but **especially in transportation**, because fatigue can result in disastrous accidents. It is estimated that **25% of all accidents are the result of driver fatigue**. Driver fatigue is the #1 cause of heavy truck crashes. Fatigue is considered a pre-condition for unsafe acts because it negatively affects the human operator's internal state.

Statistics show that:

- **31% of drivers have reported falling asleep at the wheel.** Fatigue on the road can be a **killer**.
- **Over 100,000 vehicle accidents a year are caused by fatigued drivers.**

CAUSES OF DRIVER FATIGUE

Fatigue is the **state of feeling very tired, weary or sleepy** resulting from **insufficient sleep, prolonged mental or physical work, or extended periods of stress or anxiety**. Boring or repetitive tasks can intensify feelings of fatigue. Fatigue can be described as either **acute or chronic**.

Acute fatigue results from **short-term sleep loss** or from short periods of heavy physical or mental work. The effects of acute fatigue are of short duration and usually can be reversed by sleep and relaxation.

Fatigue can be a symptom of a medical problem, but is more commonly a result of one of the following:

- **Lack of sleep,**
- **Boredom,**
- **Changes to normal sleep-wake schedules,**
- **Use of drugs and/or alcohol,** [including some over-the-counter and prescription medications],
- **Time of day—nighttime driving,**
- **Schedule pressure,**
- **Lack of regular exercise,**
- **Poor posture,**
- **Smoking,**
- **Sleeping disorders,**
- **Driving alone,**
- **Lack of breaks,**



- Eating large meals.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF FATIGUE

Symptoms of fatigue can include the following:

- Yawning continuously,
- Weakness, lack of energy, tiredness, or exhaustion,
- Rubbing your eyes, difficulty focusing, or difficulty keeping your eyes open.
- Trouble holding your head up,
- Driving at abnormal and/or inconsistent speeds, tailgating vehicles, or drifting out of your lane.
- Staring at the vehicle in front of you
- Failure to obey traffic signs
- Back tension
- Highway hypnosis
- Jerking yourself awake

EFFECTS OF FATIGUE IN THE WORKPLACE

The effects of fatigue, and how that relates to employee work performance and safety includes the following concerns:

- Reduced decision making ability,
- Reduced ability to do complex planning,
- Reduced communication skills,
- Reduced productivity / performance,
- Reduced attention and vigilance,
- Reduced ability to handle stress on the job,
- Reduced reaction time - both in speed and thought (a few studies have shown this effect as similar to being legally drunk),
- Loss of memory or the ability to recall details,
- Failure to respond to changes in surroundings or information provided,
- Unable to stay awake (e.g., falling asleep while operating machinery or driving a vehicle),
- Increased tendency for risk-taking,
- Increased forgetfulness,
- Increased errors in judgment,
- Increased sick time, absenteeism, rate of turnover,
- Increased medical costs, and
- Increased accident rates.



PREVENTION OF DRIVER FATIGUE

Recognizing and preventing driver fatigue is the best way to avoid accidents and injuries related to it. Remember the following:

- **Get enough rest (7-8 hours is recommended)**
- **Keep vehicle cool with fresh air circulating,**
- **Avoid long drives at night,**
- **Take a break every few hours,**
- **Don't drive when you are tired—PULL OVER! Taking a nap or a break may be an inconvenience, but an accident will take considerably longer!**
- **Eat light meals and snacks.**
- **Learn ways to deal with stress.**
- **Get regular exercise and stop to stretch often.**
- **Keep a regular schedule.**
- **Sing, chew gum, stretch and vary driving speeds**