Fatigue on the Roadways Meeting Kit



DRIVER FATIGUE ON THE JOB

Fatigue can result when you do not get enough sleep, or quality sleep. It can impair your ability to safely perform tasks, including driving. Job-related factors (e.g., long hours of work and driving, long commutes) can contribute to workers' risk of driver fatigue. The good news: A fatigue risk management system will help employers and workers work together to reduce the risks of driver fatigue.

Fatigue can result when you do not get enough sleep or do not get quality sleep. It can impair your driving, similar to alcohol impairment. A survey of the U.S population found that 37% of workers got less than the recommended minimum of 7 hours of sleep.

WHAT CAUSES FATIGUE?

- Being awake for many consecutive hours
- Not getting enough sleep over multiple days
- Time of day: Your body has a sleep/wake cycle that tells you when to be alert and when it's time to sleep. The urge to sleep is the most intense in the early morning hours.
- Monotonous tasks or long periods of inactivity
- Health factors such as sleep disorders or medications that cause drowsiness

DRIVING WHILE FATIGUED

We have all been there- our eyes get heavy, we begin to close them, and then our head suddenly jerks up after hitting the rumble strips on the side of the road. When this occurs it will wake an individual up, but only for a short period. This is an unsafe act that is quite common on our roadways.

Fatigued driving can be caused by any number of factors. The most common cause of fatigued driving is lack of sleep. It can also be caused or made worse by untreated sleep disorders, medications, drinking alcohol, or shift work.

HOW FATIGUE AFFECTS YOUR DRIVING

Fatigue has a huge impact on your driving and can affect your ability to drive safely, similar to the effect of drink driving. Research shows that being awake for 17 hours has the same affect on your driving ability as a BAC (blood alcohol concentration) of 0.05. Going without sleep for 24 hours has the same affect as a BAC of 0.1, double the legal limit.

While driving tired you might find you:

- Have trouble remembering the last few kilometres driven, day dream or miss exits or traffic signs
- Drift from your lane, tailgate, hit a shoulder rumble strip or have difficulty maintaining a consistent, correct speed

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF DRIVER FATIGUE?

- Nodding off
- Reacting more slowly to changing road conditions, other drivers, or pedestrians
- Making poor decisions
- Drifting from your lane
- Experiencing “tunnel vision” (when you lose sense of what’s going on in the periphery)
- Experiencing “microsleeps” (brief sleep episodes lasting from a fraction of a second up to 30 seconds)
- Forgetting the last few miles you drove

WHAT CAN WORKERS DO TO PREVENT DRIVER FATIGUE ON THE JOB?

- 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.
- Plan your activities outside work to allow enough time for adequate sleep.
- 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 co-workers for signs of fatigue.
- Report instances of fatigue in yourself and others to your direct supervisor, who can help to determine the safest course of action.
- If your work schedule is too demanding or the hours you are working are making you feel fatigued every single day, talk with a supervisor. Sometimes responsibilities or schedules can be altered to improve productivity and safety.
- It is important to understand the side effects of medication before using it at work or while driving.
- Take care of your health. Addressing other health issues can greatly improve how you feel both at home and at work.
- Eat a better diet. Food to humans is as gasoline is to a car– if you put dirty gas in your car it will not run well. Same goes with your body!

FINAL WORD

Driving is one of the more hazardous tasks we complete often. When you pair it with unsafe acts such as driving while fatigued, you not only put yourself at risk, but you also put everyone around you at risk. Be proactive in preventing fatigue and drowsiness. When it is affecting you while driving, pull over and get rest before continuing on.