

April 2007 Safety Meeting

Driver Fatigue

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself driving, staring at the road ahead, almost hypnotized by the ribbon of road in front of you? Fatigue lessens both your mental ability and your physical coordination, and can lead to a serious accident. The longer you drive, the less alert you become and the risk of you becoming involved in an accident increases greatly. According to the DOT, the frequency of accidents increases dramatically once a driver reaches about seven hours of driving time. That period can also be shortened with other factors. It is also estimated by the DOT that driver fatigue causes almost as many accidents as driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Topical Information

Signs of Fatigue

- As you begin to tire, you become restless in your seat, then you become very quiet.
- You may experience occasional lapses of attention to the road.
- Your eyes stay fixed on the road ahead of you. You are not scanning your rear view mirrors or activities to the left or right of you.
- Your ability to judge distances and speed decreases.
- You might nod off to sleep for fractions of a second.
- You can't remember the sights and sounds of the last few miles.

How to Combat Fatigue

- Get plenty of rest and eat well-balanced meals with plenty of protein. Avoid over-eating before a trip.
- Don't operate a vehicle when you're tired or when you're sick.
- Turn on the radio and play upbeat, lively music.
- Make rest stops when needed and exercise a little before getting back into the cab. Deep knee bends combined with a few deep breaths can help "get the blood flowing".
- Drink coffee, soft drinks or water. Cold liquids & caffeine can help. However, **do not** drink alcohol—it's illegal to do so and it will impair your senses.
- Open the windows to let fresh air in. Turn down the cab heat in the winter.

- Sit erect behind the wheel. Slouching can increase your feelings of fatigue.
- Avoid taking medications that can cause drowsiness. Read the label on the container and discuss with your healthcare provider.
- Drive always within the DOT's hours-of-service regulations.
- Remember that, depending on your condition, it might not be a good idea for you to drive on a particular day. Listen to your supervisor, co-workers, friends and family. If they question your ability to drive, don't do it!

Discussion:

Discuss with your group ways in which they individually combat fatigue. List those items and discuss the merits of each. Discuss how each driver in your group can self-evaluate their ability to drive on a particular day. Discuss how tired is too tired and when should they "call it a day"?

Closing

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) says that "No driver should operate a motor vehicle while the driver's ability or alertness is so impaired, or so likely to become impaired, through fatigue as to make it unsafe to operate the motor vehicle." Learn to recognize the signs of fatigue, follow safe driving practices and get the rest required to safely operate your motor vehicle. Remember also that driving while fatigued is a great risk factor that should be carefully considered at all times.

**April 2007 Test
Driver Fatigue**

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: Read and answer each of the following questions. When complete, grade the test and review incorrect answers so each employee is “armed” with the correct answers before they leave the training.

1. Don't operate a vehicle if you are under the influence of drugs.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. Eating properly can make you more alert for a longer period.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Drinking small doses of wine is recommended to fight fatigue.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. Judgment is reduced when fatigued.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. Nodding off to sleep for short periods of time is a sure sign of fatigue.
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. According to the DOT, after _ hours of driving, the frequency of accidents increases dramatically:
 - a. 3
 - b. 5
 - c. 7
 - d. 9

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Answer Sheet

1. a
2. a
3. b
4. a
5. a
6. c