

# **Actions for the Drowsy Driver**

## **Introduction**

We can do much research on driver tiredness and provide lots of statistical data to confirm the dangers of driver tiredness.

We can also share many road crash photos of head-on and rollover crashes where the contributing factors are difficult to explain other than possible driver tiredness.

But how do we reduce road crashes which have been caused by driver tiredness?

## **Raising Awareness of the Risks of Driver Tiredness**

Publicity campaigns may raise awareness about the problem of driver fatigue and possible countermeasures.

### **International campaigns have focused on some of these themes:**

- Driving when fatigued is a risk equal to driving drunk
- Tactical use of driver rotation, caffeine, napping
- Encouraging drivers to consider fatigue-related driving risk as a personal responsibility
- Educating the community on minimum sleep requirements and fatigue warning signs
- Challenging existing incorrect beliefs about personal ability to cope with fatigue
- Targeting specific populations (such as driving schools) with direct education.

## **Raising only Awareness of Driver Fatigue not Sufficient**

Researcher have concluded that in general, a road safety publicity campaign, by itself, has only modest impact on attitudes and behaviour and no significant impact on crashes. Safety campaigns work best when combined with other interventions, such as enforcement of traffic laws and regulations, or provision of other safety services and products.

Perception of sleepiness does not result in cessation of driving. Although it is possible to educate or teach drivers to become more aware of the early signs of fatigue or sleepiness, it may be very difficult to make them take a break from driving.

A problem for driver fatigue campaigns is that public fatigue campaigns is that fatigued driving by private drivers is not punishable by law. It is therefore difficult if not impossible, at least where private drivers are concerned to link public campaign themes with enforcement or legal consequences. For professional drivers, the case is different where there may be legislation and the possibility of enforcement concerning work and rest hours.

As an online road safety portal we can however play a small part in raising awareness of these risks, and motivate not only drivers but also passengers to help identify when a driver may be fatigued.

## **Once driving, motorists should:**

- Look for the warning signs of fatigue: Drivers who
  - can't remember the last few kilometers driven
  - drift from their lanes or hit a rumble strip
  - experience wandering or disconnected thoughts
  - yawn repeatedly
  - have difficulty focusing or keeping their eyes open
  - tailgate or miss traffic signs
  - have trouble keeping their head up
  - keep jerking their vehicles back into the lane
- Recognize that they are in danger of falling asleep and cannot predict when a microsleep may occur.
- Not count on the radio, open window or other "tricks" to keep them awake.
- Respond to symptoms of fatigue by finding a safe place to stop for a break.
- Pull off into a safe area away from traffic and take a brief nap (15 to 45 minutes) if tired.
- Drink coffee or a functional energy drink to promote short-term alertness if needed. (It takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream.)

## **Identify the signs of Driver Fatigue/ Tiredness**

### **If you must stop along the roadway to rest, follow these precautions:**

- Stop at a roadside rest area. If no such facility is available, make sure that you are as far off the freeway as possible.
- If it is after dark, find a lighted area to park.
- Give yourself a little outside air, but make sure that windows are closed enough to prevent entry from the outside.
- Lock all doors.
- Turn on your parking lights and turn off other electrical equipment.
- After you rest, get out of the vehicle and walk for a few minutes to be sure you are completely awake before you begin to drive again.

## **We would like to advise visitors to also view these other pages:**

Driver tiredness is one of the most significant threats to safety of all road users. Tiredness is often perceived as one of the "driver distractions" taking the eyes and concentration of the driver away from driving.

Fatigue too often results in preventable head-on collisions and rollover crashes.

On the Arrive Alive website this is discussed on several pages with reference to Driver tiredness, Driver Fatigue and Drowsiness.