

Safety Bulletin

Sleep Well Last Night? Here's Why it Matters

Driving a truck is hard work. Driving a truck when you're tired can be almost impossible. That's why you must get a good night's sleep.

You've probably heard people talk about how *much* sleep you need (some experts, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, say you need 7-9 hours a night). But a recent study published in the *Accident Analysis & Prevention* journal shows that how long you sleep may not be as important as how well you sleep. Quality sleep can help you stay alert on the road.



How can you get a good night's sleep? Try these tips:

- **Keep it safe** – Park your truck in an area you trust – a favorite truck stop or rest area is ideal.
- **Keep it quiet** – Use ear plugs, a fan or another “white noise” device to block out unwanted sounds. Also, silence your smartphone.
- **Keep it dark** – Close the shades inside your truck, or use an eye mask to block out light.
- **Keep it comfortable** – Make sure your cab or room isn't too hot or too cold. Also, upgrade to a more comfortable pillow or mattress in your sleeper.
- **Keep it calm** – Develop a calming bedtime routine. Wash your face, brush your teeth, and change into comfortable clothes. Avoid big meals, caffeine, spicy foods or large drinks two-to-three hours before you go to sleep.

What if you're *still* sleepy? If you get 7-to-9 hours of sleep a night and still feel tired (or if you wake up many times a night), it could be a sign of a problem such as sleep apnea. That means you stop breathing during sleep for at least 10 seconds at a time.

You may have heard that, in late summer, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMSCA) withdrew its proposed rule regarding testing and treating truck drivers for sleep apnea. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't worry about it. Sleep apnea can be life threatening.

So, if you're still not well rested, get tested for sleep apnea by your doctor. It doesn't mean you'll go out of service. If your sleep apnea is mild, you can still drive, and if it's moderate to severe, you can drive again once your sleep apnea is controlled with a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) breathing machine.

