

Safety Bulletin

9 Tips to Avoid Drowsy Driving When Daylight Saving Time Ends

It's time for most of us to "fall back." Even though we technically gain an hour of sleep when daylight saving time ends, the clock change still upsets our body's circadian rhythm (our normal sleep cycle). That means we run the risk of becoming tired sooner. And those darker evening commutes don't help.

It's no wonder why the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) makes the first full week in November Drowsy Driving Prevention Week. Experts indicate that the first week or two after a time change are when all drivers face an increased risk for drowsy driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that drowsy driving is responsible for more than 800 deaths each year, and it believes those numbers are underestimated.



Take steps now to avoid drowsy driving.

First, know the warning signs. Yawning or blinking frequently, difficulty remembering the past few miles driven, missing your exit, drifting from your lane or hitting a rumble strip are all potential warning signs, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Next, follow these nine safety tips.

1. Get 7-9 hours of sleep a night.
2. Avoid staying up late on the night the clocks change. While it's tempting, it also can make you more tired the next day.
3. Be especially careful on high-speed, long or rural highways. People are more likely to fall asleep while driving on those roads, according to the NSF.
4. Know your risk. Men are more likely than women (56 percent to 45 percent) to drive while drowsy.
5. Watch other motorists. The NSF estimates that 70 million people are sleep deprived, and 1 in 4 U.S. adults personally know someone who has fallen asleep at the wheel.
6. Read the labels on your medications, and make sure they don't cause drowsiness.
7. See your doctor to get treated for any health conditions — such as obstructive sleep apnea — that may threaten the quality of your sleep.
8. If you start to get sleepy while driving, NHTSA recommends drinking one to two cups of coffee and pulling over for a short 20-minute nap in a rest area or other well-lit, safe place. This has shown to improve awareness over a short period of time.
9. When in doubt, slow down. By reducing your speed and driving cautiously, you help create safer roads for yourself and other motorists, no matter the time.

