

# **WAKE UP!**

## **to the Risks of Drowsy Driving**



Have you ever felt sleepy or caught yourself nodding off when driving? **Drowsy driving can be as dangerous as driving drunk. Just as alcohol can impair driver performance, drowsiness can slow reaction time, impair judgment and increase the risk of a crash.**

### **Who Is At Risk?**

- Anyone can fall asleep when driving. Drivers at highest risk for crashes due to drowsy driving include:
  - commercial truck drivers
  - late night shift workers
  - parents taking care of young children
  - people with untreated sleep disorders
  - young drivers, especially males, under age 26
- Drowsy driving crashes usually involve only one vehicle in which the driver is alone, and the injuries tend to be serious or fatal.

### **Is Falling Asleep Something You Can Control?**

- It's almost impossible to know if you will fall asleep when tired and driving. You can fall asleep and not even know it.
- Turning up the radio, opening the window, or turning on the air conditioner will not help you to stay awake when driving.

## What Are the Warning Signs of Drowsiness?

- Repeated yawning
- Driver inattention
- Inability to keep eyes open and head raised
- Not remembering the last few miles driven
- Having wandering or disconnected thoughts
- Drifting out of the lane or hitting rumble strips

If any of these occur, pull into a safe rest area to take a nap or switch drivers.

## Before Getting On the Road

- Get enough rest before you drive—most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep.
- Have a passenger to talk to and share the driving.
- Avoid alcohol and sedating medications—check the labels or ask your doctor.
- Plan to take a break at least every two hours or every 100 miles when driving.

## If You Feel Tired While Driving

- Pull over and take a 15 to 20 minute nap. Park in an area that is safe—away from traffic and well lit.
- Find a place to sleep for the night.
- Have someone else drive.

## Will Caffeine Keep You Alert to Drive?

- Coffee, soda and other drinks with caffeine can help overcome drowsiness. However, it takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to be effective and the relief is only short-term.
- Consuming caffeine before taking a short nap could help you get the benefits of both. Keep in mind that caffeine won't have much effect on people who take it regularly.

## Useful Websites

New York State Department of Health

[www.nyhealth.gov/](http://www.nyhealth.gov/)

New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee

[www.SafeNY.ny.gov/drow-ndx.htm](http://www.SafeNY.ny.gov/drow-ndx.htm)

National Sleep Foundation [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org) or

[www.drowsydriving.org](http://www.drowsydriving.org)

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