

Safety Fact Sheet



These programs offered by the Utah Safety Council offer practical strategies to reduce collision related injuries and fatalities on Utah roadways.

GET HOME SAFE: FIGHT DROWSY DRIVING

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration more than 100,000 motor vehicle crashes each year are a result of drowsy driving.

Driving while fatigued is a problem for a number of reasons. According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), drowsiness has a number of physical side effects that can impair driving, including tunnel vision, shortened attention span and reduced reaction times. Drowsy driving can't process information as quickly or as accurately as alert drivers.

Facts and Fiction about Sleep

Many people have misconceptions about sleep, which NSF dispels:

- **Coffee can overcome drowsiness while driving.** Only sleep can truly overcome drowsiness. Caffeine may make you feel more alert but the results are temporary. People who take stimulants while severely sleep deprived are likely to have "micro-sleeps," which are essentially four to five second naps. A vehicle travelling at 55 mph can cover more than 100 yards in four to five seconds. Plenty of time for an accident.
- **I'm a safe driver so it doesn't matter if I am sleepy.** The only safe driver is an alert one. When fatigued, even the best drivers become confused and use poor judgment.
- **I can't take naps.** Despite the fact that many people insist they cannot nap, sleep-deprived individuals usually can do so easily if they give themselves the chance. Even if you think you can't nap, pull over and recline for 15 minutes. It is likely you will be able to fall asleep. Always be sure to do so safely, in busy areas with your car doors locked.
- **I can tell when I am going to fall asleep.** While most people believe they can control and predict when they are about to fall asleep, they cannot. A drowsy person can fall asleep without even being aware of it. People are also unable to tell how long they have been asleep.

When Drowsiness Strikes

Under no circumstances should you drive while drowsy. Turning up the radio, rolling down the windows, getting out of the car and running, or slapping yourself are not effective means of waking yourself up. The only remedy for drowsiness is sleep.

If you find yourself becoming sleepy while behind the wheel- other signs include drifting in and out of your lane or driving over rumble strips. You should pull over immediately. Options for getting home safely include taking a nap on the side of the road until you are rested enough to drive, calling a friend or family member to come pick you up, or taking a cab or public transportation home. Drowsy driving accidents most often occur when a driver is alone in the vehicle. Carpooling provides someone who can alert the driver of danger and take over behind the wheel if necessary.

You can also take measures to prevent drowsiness from striking. The average person requires anywhere from seven to nine hours of sleep each night. It is best if you can keep a regular sleep schedule and stick to it!