

# Driver Fatigue

**Objective:** To improve recognition of the common symptoms of driver fatigue and to provide tips for drowsy driving prevention

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that driver drowsiness and fatigue is one of the **main causes** of police-reported road crashes each year. Precautions are needed from both employees and employers to assure safety on the road.



## Symptoms of Driver Fatigue

- A burning sensation in the eyes
- Eyelids feeling heavy
- Twitching or muscle tension
- Wandering, disconnected thoughts
- Sensations in limbs (e.g., a feeling of heaviness, light tingling, or numbness)

## Contributing Factors

- Long shifts
- Many accumulative days of long shifts
- The time of day
- Changes in the time of work that disrupt the body's "internal clock"
- Scheduling that does not allow for sufficient rest and recovery between shifts
- Human factors, such as age, physical fitness, and health status
- The consumption of heavy meals or insufficient nutrition
- The use of medications that cause drowsiness, such as cold or allergy medicines

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## Employee Solutions

- **Healthy sleep patterns:** Get plenty of rest.
- **Proper nutrition:** Eat a well-balanced and healthy diet. Avoid heavy and greasy foods.
- **Regular exercise:** Maintain a balanced program to improve stamina.
- **Fitness:** Excessive weight is taxing to the body and may increase fatigue. Establish a weight control plan that includes proper diet and exercise.
- **Effective sleeping environment:** Make your sleep environment comfortable, e.g., reduce noise and lights and adjust the temperature and ventilation to fit your needs.
- **Relaxation time:** Schedule time to relax and do things you enjoy.
- **No smoking:** Nicotine creates dependency and is incompatible with good health.
- **Limited caffeine intake:** Caffeine is a drug that may over-stimulate the body and mind, interfering with sleep and increasing anxiety levels.
- **Limited alcoholic beverages:** Alcohol depresses bodily functions, causing lethargy and fatigue. Consumption close to bedtime can disturb sleep and cause emotional distress.

## Employer Responsibilities

- Assure regular ride-alongs and on-the-road assessments.
- Provide a means of regular communication or contact.
- Allow time for sleep, assuring they can get at least 7 hours of continuous sleep per 24 hours.
- Operate flexible schedules, allowing for short breaks or discretionary sleep.
- Stick to a schedule, minimizing irregular or unfamiliar work shifts.
- Provide drivers sufficient notice of work, allowing them time to plan for adequate rest.
- When changing between night and day shifts, allow time for drivers to alter sleep patterns.
- When drivers return from leave, give them time to adapt and minimize night schedules.
- Provide training for drivers, supervisors, schedulers, and any employee whose actions may affect road safety on fatigue causes and controls.

# Driver Fatigue

This form documents that the training specified above was presented to the listed participants. By signing below, each participant acknowledges receiving this training.

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_ Trainer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Class Participants:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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