



A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Fatigue: Drowsy Driving

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Overview:** Discusses the signs and negative effects of fatigue when driving, and methods to reduce risks.
- Purpose:** To educate employees and organizations to make positive changes to identify and reduce fatigue when driving and improve worker health and safety.
- Preparation:** Change the script as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.
- Handouts:** Quick Review of Safety Fatigue: Drowsy Driving
- Notes:** Scheduling has a great effect on an employee's quantity and quality of sleep. Both time of day and duration of work hours has a strong impact on drowsiness and fatigue. Further resources on developing better schedules can be found in the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health resource "Work Schedules: Shift Work and Long Hours."

Drowsy Driving

Some of you may have felt the symptoms of drowsy driving: decreased alertness, slower reaction time, nodding your head. Maybe you opened a window, hoping the fresh air would revive you or turned up the radio?

The National Traffic Safety Administration estimates that an average of 83,000 police-reported crashes are caused by fatigued drivers every year, resulting in nearly 37,000 injuries and 900 deaths. Approximately 1 million crashes annually are thought to be attributed to driver inattention or lapses.

Fatigue can make these lapses in attention more likely to occur. So please, pay attention to the risks related to driving while tired. Your health and safety are important to us; we don't want you to get hurt.

Who Is at Risk?

If you are sleep deprived or fatigued, you are, of course, at risk. However, you are also at risk if you:

- Drive alone
- Drive long distances without rest breaks
- Drive through the night or during the night
- Have consumed alcohol or taken medication that induces drowsiness
- Have untreated sleep apnea or narcolepsy or other sleep disorders
- Work long or irregular hours, or your sleep is otherwise disrupted due to shift work

Signs of Drowsy Driving

Pay attention to the warning signs that you might be driving fatigued:

- You have difficulty focusing or keeping your eyes open

- You experience disconnected or wandering thoughts
- You have trouble keeping your head up or jerk your head up
- You drift from your lane or jerk your vehicle back
- You miss an exit you were supposed to take
- You can't remember the last few miles you've driven

Microsleep

If you have experienced any of the above signs, you may actually have experienced microsleep. Microsleep is a short burst of sleep ranging in length from 1 second to 10 seconds. Often you don't even realize you have experienced it.

Basically, your brain is so sleep deprived it is trying to force you to get some sleep. During a microsleep, you have a brief failure to respond to external stimuli.

Preventing Fatigue

One of the best ways to prevent fatigue is to get a good night's rest. It is recommended that adults get at least seven to nine hours of good sleep a night. Here are some tips to help achieve a good night's sleep:

- Have a consistent sleep schedule. Go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time every day, even on days off.
- Avoid eating large meals or consuming caffeine or alcohol before bedtime.
- Try to keep your bedroom quiet and comfortable. Keep things quiet, dark and at a comfortable temperature. If working on night shifts, consider using blackout curtains to keep the bedroom dark.
- Remove distracting electronics from the bedroom, such as TVs, computers and phones.
- Engage in relaxing activities, such as reading, about an hour before bed. If possible, avoid electronics as the light from the screens of most devices engages the brain and makes sleeping difficult.
- Use bright light to help manage circadian rhythms. Try to expose yourself to sunlight in the morning and avoid bright light before bed.
- Get regular exercise during the day. It can help reduce stress and tire you out. Try to work stretching routines into your day. Stretching helps increase blood flow, which helps supply oxygen to our muscles and brain.
- Speak with your doctor about getting screened for sleeping disorders, such as sleep apnea, if you continue to have trouble sleeping.

In addition to getting good sleep:

- If you are planning a long driving trip, consider taking a companion who can help keep you awake and look for signs of drowsiness.
- If you are on a long trip, schedule regular stops, every 100 miles or two hours.
- If you are experiencing the signs of drowsy driving, pull off to a safe area away from traffic and take a brief 15 to 20 minute nap if possible.
- Avoid alcohol and medications that may impair performance. Alcohol combined with fatigue can increase its negative effects—just like drinking on an empty stomach.

Although not an adequate replacement for sleep, caffeinated beverages can be of limited help. Keep in mind that it can take up to 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream and have an effect.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the signs of drowsy driving?
- What are some ways we can prevent drowsy driving?
- What else can we do to get more sleep?



Fatigue: Drowsy Driving Session

Planning and Review

Trainer

Training
Date

Department(s)

TRAINING GOALS

- Employees are aware of the hazards of drowsy driving.
- Employees understand the signs of drowsy driving and ways to prevent it, including best practices to improve sleep.

RESOURCES

- Minnesota Safety Council, “Drowsy Driving,” MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), “Work Schedules: Shift Work and Long Hours,” CDC.gov/niosh
- National Sleep Foundation, “Healthy Sleep Tips,” SleepFoundation.org

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

