

Fatigue Facts — Driver handout

According to the NTSB statistics, there are about 250 professional drivers killed each year due to fatigue. The more you know about what works and what doesn't for driver fatigue, the more productive you will be and the better you will function on the road in preventing an accident.

The most prevalent factors in fatigue-related trucking accidents are:

- Duration of sleep during the driver's last sleep period.

- The amount of sleep the driver got in the previous 24 hours.
- Whether the sleep is continuous or interrupted.

Getting the right kind of sleep is just as important as getting enough sleep. Getting eight hours of sleep uninterrupted allows your body to recycle itself mentally and physically.

Tips for reducing fatigue on the road

- Plan routes ahead of time to minimize driving and allow time for breaks.
- Operate your vehicle smoothly: cut down on rough shifting, hard turns, and sudden braking.
- Avoid caffeine on the road — it'll pick the you up for a while, but it'll leave you even more tired than ever before.
- If you wear glasses, make sure your prescription is current; use sunglasses in sunny weather.
- Keep your windshield clean.
- Look for healthy meals on the road. Avoid fatty foods, which make a driver sluggish.
- Get plenty of sleep.

Tips for better sleep

- Make sure the temperature of the room is comfortable.
- A routine of exercise earlier in the day can make going to sleep easier, but don't exercise right before bed.
- Avoid heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol before trying to sleep.
- If you can't sleep right away, don't get angry or frustrated — just get up and find something quiet to do until you do feel drowsy.

Danger signs

- You find yourself weaving in your lane or drifting across the lines (indicating a loss of concentration and coordination).
- Your eyes start to play tricks on you. An exit ramp may look like your lane, or a sign might look like a person.

- You lose mental focus and become unable to concentrate on one thing for more than a few seconds.
- Your eyelids feel unbearably heavy, occasionally even closing by themselves.
- Your head falls toward your check, and you may actually doze off.

No matter how many years you've been a truck driver, or how many miles you've logged, you're not a machine. You're human, and you need sleep. You've made it through enough tough spots to know that it requires a clear mind and a steady hand to control your vehicle. So, when you consider going just a little farther before you rest, is it really worth it?