

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

Drowsy Driving Continues to be a Problem on the Roads

2012 Drowsy Driving Fact Sheet
National Drowsy Driving Prevention Week (November 11 – 17, 2012)

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety conducts research with a focus toward creating a social climate where traffic safety is highly valued and rigorously pursued. The 2012 Traffic Safety Culture Index found that 96% of drivers consider it to be unacceptable for someone to drive when they are so sleepy that they have a hard time keeping their eyes open.

Other key findings regarding drowsy driving include:

- Eight out of ten (80%) people view other drivers driving while drowsy as a serious threat to their own personal safety and a completely unacceptable behavior.
- Nearly one in ten licensed drivers (9.7%) report having fallen asleep or nodded-off while driving within the past year; 46 percent report having done so at least once in their lifetime.
- Despite this, 30 percent of licensed drivers reported having driven when they were so tired that they had a hard time keeping their eyes open in the past 30 days.
- Twenty percent reported having done this more than once, and 2.6 percent reported having done this fairly often or regularly.

Among licensed drivers 16 – 24

- Thirty-one percent of licensed drivers reported that they had driven while they were “so sleepy that they had a hard time keeping their eyes open” in the past 30 days. Eighteen percent reported having done so more than once in this time and 5.7 percent reported having done so fairly often or regularly.
- One in seven (14.8%) licensed drivers reported having fallen asleep or nodded off while driving within the past year; 33 percent reported having done so at least once in their lifetime.

Prior Research

With the belief that the number of drowsy driving crashes has been under-reported and underestimated, the AAA Foundation conducted a 2010 study, [*Asleep at the Wheel: The Prevalence and Impact of Drowsy Driving*](#), that presented estimates of the prevalence of drowsy driving on the roads and the proportion of crashes each year that involves a drowsy driver.

Key Findings:

- An estimated one in six (16.5%) fatal crashes, one in eight (13.1%) crashes resulting in hospitalization, and one in 14 (7%) of all crashes in which a passenger vehicle is towed involved a drowsy driver.



Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.

- Two out of five drivers (41%) reported 'falling asleep or nodding off' while driving at least once in their lifetime; more than one in ten (11%) reported having done so within the past year, and four percent said they did so in the past month.
- Men (52%) were much more likely than women (30%) to report having ever fallen asleep while driving; men (14%) were also more likely than women (8%) to admit having done so in the past year.
- Crash-involved drivers age 16-24 were nearly twice as likely to be drowsy at the time of their crash as drivers age 40-59.
- Drivers age 24 and younger were most likely to report having fallen asleep in the past year, and they were least likely to report having never fallen asleep. This is consistent with other studies that have found younger drivers to have a higher risk of falling asleep at the wheel.

As we approach National Drowsy Driving Prevention Week (November 11- 17, 2012) here are some warning signs and safety tips for you to consider.

Warning signs of sleepiness include, but are not limited to:

- Having difficulty keeping your eyes open and focused, and/or having heavy eyelids
- Difficulty keeping your head up
- Yawning repeatedly and rubbing your eyes
- Drifting from your lane, swerving, tailgating, and/or hitting rumble strips
- Inability to clearly remember the last few miles driven
- Missing traffic signs or driving past your intended exit
- Feeling irritable or restless

Tips to remain alert and prevent a crash:

- Get plenty of sleep (at least seven hours) the night before a long trip
- Stop driving if you become sleepy; someone who is tired could fall asleep at any time – fatigue impacts reaction time, judgment, and vision, causing people who are very sleepy to behave in similar ways to those who are drunk
- Travel at times when you are normally awake, and stay overnight rather than driving straight through
- Schedule a break every two hours or every 100 miles
- Drink a caffeinated beverage. Since it takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream, find a safe place to take a rest while you're waiting for the caffeine to take effect

For more information on drowsy driving, including the Foundation's brochure, [How To Avoid Drowsy Driving](#), visit www.AAAFoundation.org and the National Sleep Foundation's website, www.sleepfoundation.org.

The 2012 AAA Foundation Traffic Safety Culture Index will be released in January 2013. For the complete Drowsy Driving analysis visit www.aaafoundation.org/projects.

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit www.aaafoundation.org for more information.