

Road Safety News

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Breaking news

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MOVE TO DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME INCREASES RISK OF DROWSY DRIVING

More than a third of drivers admit to falling asleep at wheel;
National Road Safety Foundation offers tips to stay awake on the road



NEW YORK, March 10, 2010 -- As clocks spring ahead for the start of daylight savings time this weekend, roads and highways throughout the nation become a bit more crowded and dangerous, according to The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc.

Driver fatigue, which can be brought on by the time change, is responsible for more than 100,000 crashes every year, resulting in about 1,500 deaths, 71,000 injuries and more than \$12 billion in losses, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates.

"Drowsiness can be as dangerous as drinking and driving," said David Reich, public relations director for the National Road Safety Foundation. "Studies show 60 percent of us have driven while fatigued and more than a third admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel."

At highway speeds, dozing for even two or three seconds can be enough for a driver to veer out of his lane into an oncoming car or off the road and into a tree and travel the length of a football field.

Experts point to several signs that should warn a driver to stop and rest:

- Difficulty focusing, and frequent blinking
- Not remembering the last few miles driven
- Head snaps / nodding
- Repeated yawning or rubbing eyes

Drifting out of your lane, tailgating or hitting rumble strips

A driver who experiences any of these warning signs should pull over at the next exit or a safe rest area and take a break or, if possible, a 20-minute nap. Have a cup or two of coffee or a caffeinated snack and allow 30 minutes for the caffeine to enter your bloodstream. Don't drink alcohol or take medications.

Sleep-induced crashes are often very serious, since the driver does not take evasive or corrective action as the vehicle loses control.

The National Road Safety Foundation produces films and teaching materials that have been used to train millions of young drivers. Its programs, "Almost Home: A profile of the drowsy driver" and "Recognizing the Drowsy Driver," as well as others on drinking and driving and speed and aggression can be downloaded free at www.nrsf.org or call toll free 866-SAFEPATH (723-3728).