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AS DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS, DANGER ON ROADS INCREASES

Watch for signs of drowsy driving, says The National Road Safety Foundation

NEW YORK, Nov. 3, 2016 -- As we move our clocks back an hour this weekend, our streets and highways become more dangerous. Despite the extra hour of sleep, The National Road Safety Foundation warns that the end of daylight savings time means there's an increased risk of drowsy driving as we do more driving in darkness.

"Fatigue is a factor in more than 100,000 crashes every year," says David Reich of the National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit group that produces free driver safety films and materials used in schools nationwide.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that fatigue-related crashes result in at least 1,500 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses each year.

Drowsy driving crashes often involve a single vehicle that leaves the roadway, and the dozing driver doesn't attempt corrective action to avoid crashing into another car or a tree or other obstruction alongside the roadway. These crashes often result in serious injuries or death. "Many experts say drowsy driving is as dangerous as drunk driving, in terms of the risk of serious injury or death to the driver and passengers," Reich says.

Studies show more than 60 percent of U.S. motorists have driven while fatigued, and nearly 37 percent admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel. At highway speeds, a driver who dozes for only four or five seconds can travel more than the length of a football field, crossing into oncoming traffic or off the road and into a tree.

Drowsy driving is especially prevalent among teens, who tend to keep late hours and think they can function on minimal sleep. Ironically, experts say, teens require more sleep than adults.

Safety experts remind drivers to never drink alcohol before driving and to check any medications you take to see if they might induce drowsiness.

The National Road Safety Foundation urges drivers to be alert to these signs of drowsiness while driving:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, rubbing eyes
- Daydreaming or not remembering the last few miles driven
- Head snaps and yawning
- Drifting out of your lane, tailgating or hitting rumble strips

If you experience any of these warning signs, pull over safely and take a break. Have a cup of coffee or a caffeinated snack or take a 20-minute nap. Allow 30 minutes for caffeine to enter your bloodstream. Some common remedies like blasting the radio or opening the car windows are not effective at preventing drowsiness while driving.

"Fatigue can force you into 'micro-sleeps' lasting several seconds, which can have devastating results," says Reich. "We've seen too many examples of people trying to make it those last few miles, only to crash a block from home. Don't try to tough it out."

NRSF has a free program on drowsy driving, which includes "Almost Home," a 16-minute video and a drowsiness self-assessment quiz. Both can be down-loaded free by clicking on www.nrsf.org or www.teenlane.org.

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF) is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries on our nation's roads by promoting safe driving awareness and lifelong education. NRSF produces FREE traffic safety programs on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driving skills, pedestrian safety and a host of other safety issues. NRSF also sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities. For more information or to download free programs, visit www.nrsf.org or www.teenlane.org

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