



Health Advisory: Drowsy Driving

Drowsy driving is common on U.S. roads and represents a pervasive threat to public health and transportation safety. Drowsiness is similar to alcohol in the way that it compromises driving ability by reducing alertness and attentiveness, delaying reaction times, and hindering decision-making skills. The severe driving impairment caused by drowsiness increases the risk of motor-vehicle accidents, injuries and fatalities.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that states mandate instruction in drowsy driving education as a requirement for driver's education programs, provide comprehensive information about drowsy driving in state curricula and driver's manuals, and include questions related to drowsy driving on driver's license exams. The AASM also advises transportation companies to promote public safety by adhering to hours-of-service regulations, scheduling work shifts based on sleep need and circadian timing, implementing an evidence-based fatigue management system, and screening drivers for sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea.

The AASM encourages every driver to take responsibility for staying "Awake at the Wheel" by making it a daily priority to get sufficient sleep, refusing to drive when sleep-deprived, recognizing the signs of drowsiness, and pulling off the road to a safe location when sleepy.

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The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) is a professional membership society that improves sleep health and promotes high quality, patient-centered care through advocacy, education, strategic research, and practice standards (aasm.org).

A searchable directory of AASM-accredited member sleep centers is available at sleepeducation.org.