



Drowsiness & Fatigue

CAGC INFORMATION ALERT

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Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors

1045, 1015 - 4th Street SW
Calgary, Alberta
T2R 1J4

Phone: 403 265 0045
Fax: 403 265 0025
E-mail: info@cagc.ca

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Driving Drowsy

Falling asleep at the wheel is no joke. It happens to thousands of Canadians each year with deadly consequences. Emerging research indicates drowsiness and fatigue are contributing factors in at least 8000 crashes across Canada annually, claiming hundreds of lives and causing thousands of injuries. Sleep experts say, driving while drowsy slows reaction time decreases awareness and impairs judgement the same way alcohol affects the body.

An Australian study determined driving after being awake for 17 hours can have the same intoxicating effect as driving with blood-alcohol content above legal limit. If you have a drink or two, and then drive late at night, you're really into high-risk territory.

Falling asleep at highway speeds even for two or three seconds (a so called "microsleep episode") can be deadly. In those two or three seconds, your vehicle travels the length of a football field without a brain controlling it, notes Dr. Adam Moscovitch of the Calgary-based Canadian Sleep Institute.

Keys to a Safe Drive

Get enough sleep. Most people require seven or eight hours of sleep a night to function well. If necessary, supplement your main sleep with naps.

Be aware of collision risk. Recognize that you can fall asleep at the wheel particularly if you haven't been getting adequate rest. Eat lightly and avoid heavy fatty foods before you drive.

Pay attention to your vehicle Environment. Keep it well-ventilated, if you are alone listen to the radio (especially talk radio).

Take a nap before you get behind the wheel. A 15 to 20 minute "power nap" can help you feel refreshed and capable of driving safety.

Use caffeine wisely. Caffeine does boost alertness and performance about 30 minutes after ingestion, but its effect can be diminished by over use and it can inhibit regular sleep patterns, making you more tired the next day.

When possible, don't drive alone. Someone to talk with keeps your mind engaged and reduces the likelihood that you'll fall asleep at the wheel.

Information from the July issue of Westworld Magazine.