

# Asleep at The Wheel

**Fatigue on the road could be a killer!**

New  Nouveau  
**Brunswick**  
C A N A D A

Public Safety

INSURANCE BUREAU OF CANADA  BUREAU D'ASSURANCE DU CANADA

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

*Fatigue on the road can be a killer. It happens frequently on long drives, especially long night drives. Fatigue behind the wheel is a very real danger, even if you have never experienced it first-hand.*

Driver fatigue severely impairs alertness and judgment and can affect anyone.

If you are experiencing any one of the following symptoms, find a safe place to pull over.

- Loss of concentration
- Drowsiness
- Yawning
- Slow reactions
- Sore or tired eyes
- Boredom
- Feeling irritable and restless
- Missing road signs
- Having difficulty staying in the right lane when driving
- Nodding off

## **Have you heard of your biological clock?**

The human body is set to a 24-hour clock, which influences hormones that play a key role in the sleep and awake cycle. Your clock runs on a daily rhythm of approximately 24 hours.

Normally you sleep when it is time to sleep, which is during the night. When you are sleep deprived and tired, you can easily fall asleep at any time during the day.

Even if you are rested while driving during the night, you may feel the need to “nod off” and it will be more difficult to stay awake. Shift workers are particularly at risk.

In order to be a safer driver you must become aware of your own clock, and know what times of day you are most alert.

## **Microsleeps**

Microsleeps are brief, unintentional periods of light sleep or loss of attention.

During a microsleep, a driver will not see a red light, notice that the road has taken a curve or notice that the vehicle has travelled to the incorrect side of the road.

Microsleeps usually take place when a tired person tries to stay awake to do a boring task, like driving a long distance. Most people have experienced a microsleep at some point in their lives. They pose a great danger to drivers. If you are experiencing events such as a blank stare, head nodding and prolonged eye closure pull over right away and take a rest.

## **Crash Characteristics**

The following are some of the signs of a sleep-related crash:

- The problem occurs during late night, early morning, or mid-afternoon
- The crash is likely serious
- A single vehicle leaves the roadway
- The crash occurs on a high-speed road
- The driver does not attempt to avoid a crash

## **What you can do**

To prevent drowsy driving and its consequences:

- Plan to get enough sleep before starting a trip
- Abstain from drinking alcohol
- Limit driving between midnight and 6 a.m.
- Find a safe place to pull over and take a short nap (about 15 to 20 minutes)

As soon as you feel sleepy, stop driving and let another driver take over.

If you sleep at least eight hours a night but are still tired or if you consistently have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep at night, you should see your doctor.

**For more information on road safety please check the following websites:**

**Department of Public Safety**  
<http://www.gnb.ca/0276/index.htm>

**Road Safety Vision 2010**  
**Making Canada's Roads the Safest in the World**  
<http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/vision/2010/en/menu.htm>

**“Working together to build a safer New Brunswick.”**

