

Transport Safety Pack

DRIVING TIRED SAFETY GUIDE

Fatigue can mean, tired, weary or exhausted. Fatigued truck drivers have a higher risk of crashing because they are less alert and less able to react quickly and safely.

The Risk

Research has found that an estimated 30% of fatal truck crashes are due to fatigue. The signs of fatigue are straightforward enough:

- ∞ Constant yawning
- ∞ Sore or heavy eyes
- ∞ Trouble keeping your head up
- ∞ Daydreaming
- ∞ Difficulty remembering the last few kilometres
- ∞ Variations in driving speed
- ∞ Delayed reactions and reflexes
- ∞ Drifting in the lane.

What puts you at risk?

You put yourself at risk of a fatigue-related crash if you:

- ∞ Work irregular shifts which lead to irregular sleep
- ∞ Disrupt your built-in body clock
- ∞ Drive in the early morning (1am-6am) or in the 'afternoon lull' (1pm-4pm), when our biological time clock makes most of us feel drowsy
- ∞ Start a trip after a long day's work
- ∞ Have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnoea (symptoms of sleep apnoea include heavy snoring broken by sudden periods of silence, restless sleep and constantly being tired during the day).

Sleep debt

By not getting enough sleep you will build up a **sleep debt**, that is, you 'owe' yourself more sleep. The only way to repay this debt is by sleeping. Until you catch up on your sleep, you have a greater risk of having a fatigue-related crash.

Microsleeps – Red Alert!

This is an extremely dangerous situation where you are in an advanced stage of fatigue - the brain starts to switch off but you keep driving. Microsleeps can last from 1 to 5 seconds and the driver often does not know it is happening. The only solution is to stop driving and sleep before reaching this stage.

The best way to avoid a fatigue-related crash is to have a good night's sleep before driving. Another way, although not as effective as a good night's sleep, is to have a powernap.

Powernap

Research shows that even a short sleep of around 10 to 45 minutes can lower your risk of a crash. Pull over and take a powernap if you're feeling fatigue coming on. Or take a powernap before making your trip.

Managing fatigue

Businesses must eliminate or minimise the risks of fatigue for their employees.

Employers can:

- ∞ Organise driving schedules well in advance – involve the drivers
- ∞ Allow drivers to swap shifts - where possible
- ∞ Avoid swing shift type operations
- ∞ Plan the trip/work schedule to allow for:
 - o Mandatory and decretory rest breaks
 - o Trip distance
 - o Average legal speed
 - o Time for loading/unloading
 - o Traffic conditions

At home:

- ∞ Tell your family and friends how important sleep is to you – get them to let you sleep when you need to
- ∞ Have “quality” sleep when possible – in a quiet, comfortable and dark room
- ∞ Eat sensibly at regular times and drink plenty of water
- ∞ Exercise daily.

Rest Breaks – The Law

Please visit the www.ntc.gov.au to check on the planned changes to the fatigue driving hours.

In any five and a half hour period, do not work for more than five hours, and then take a 30 minute rest break. The rest break can be taken as one 30 minute break or two 15 minute breaks.

In any 24 hour period, only work a maximum of 14 hours (12 hours driving and 2 hours non driving work), and have 10 hours rest. One of the rest breaks must be a continuous period of at least 6 hours. However, a driver participating in the Transitional Fatigue Management Scheme can drive for up to 14 hours in a 24 hour period, but must still have 10 hours rest, including a continuous rest period of at least 6 hours. The maximum number of hours that can be worked in a week is 72 hours.

Further Information

- ∞ Visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au to download ‘National Driving Hours Regulations and Instructions for Completing the National Log Book’ and Truck Stops and Rest Areas Melbourne/Geelong
- ∞ Visit www.ntc.gov.au for fatigue safety information and the proposed changes to the regulations.

This safety guide has been produced by the Transport Industry Safety Group with the support of VicRoads to improve the safety of transport workers. It is one of 18 Safety Guides and other important information including the TISG’s ‘A Guide to Occupational Health and Safety Transport Industry’ that can be downloaded from www.vta.com.au



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