

## **Fatigue – You're More Than Just Tired** **Fatigue at Work, on the Road Can be Deadly**

Daylight Saving Time begins every year on the second Sunday in March. We "lose" an hour when the clocks are set forward (except in Hawaii and most of Arizona), and for many that means a tired couple of days as our bodies adjust.

People often make light of how little sleep they get on a regular basis; an over-worked, over-tired condition has become the norm for many. But a good night's sleep is not just a novelty, it's a necessity. The effects of fatigue are far-reaching and can have an adverse impact on all areas of our lives.

**Work often requires us** to override those natural sleep patterns. More than 43% of workers are sleep-deprived, and those most at risk work the night shift, long shifts or irregular shifts. Following are a few facts for employers:

- Safety performance decreases as employees become tired
- 62% of night shift workers complain about sleep loss
- Fatigued worker productivity costs employers \$1,200 to \$3,100 per employee annually
- Employees on rotating shifts are particularly vulnerable because they cannot adapt their "body clocks" to an alternative sleep pattern

**Drowsy driving is impaired driving**, but while we wouldn't allow a friend to drive drunk, we rarely take the keys away from our tired friends or insist they take a nap before heading out on the road. NSC has gathered research that shows:

- You are three times more likely to be in a car crash if you are fatigued
- Losing even two hours of sleep is similar to the effect of having three beers
- Being awake for more than 20 hours is the equivalent of being legally drunk

According to the CDC, the fall time change can also create, “a sudden change in the driving conditions in the late afternoon rush hour – from driving home from work during daylight hours to driving home in darkness. People may not have changed their driving habits to nighttime driving and might be at somewhat higher risk for a vehicle crash.”

**Sleep is a vital factor in overall health.** Adults need an average of seven to nine hours of sleep each night, but 30% report averaging less than six hours, according to the National Health Interview Survey.

- Chronic sleep-deprivation causes depression, obesity, cardiovascular disease and other illnesses
- Fatigue is estimated to cost employers \$136 billion a year in health-related lost productivity
- More than 70 million Americans suffer from a sleep disorder

Americans receive little education on the importance of sleep, sleep disorders and the consequences of fatigue, but industry leaders recently have been drawing attention to this issue. Employers, too, are in an ideal position to educate employees on how to avoid fatigue-related safety incidents. NSC supports science-based fatigue risk management systems in the workplace.

Change begins with the individual.

Courtesy: National Safety Council

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