



BROOME COUNTY TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD NEWSLETTER

Broome County Health Department 225 Front St. / Binghamton, NY 13905

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Drowsy Driving - Are You at Risk?

February/March 2008

Did you know?

- 100,000 crashes each year are caused by fatigued drivers. (NYSDOH - Injury Prevention)
- Drivers under the age of 25 are involved in more than ½ of all crashes in which drivers have fallen asleep. (www.drowsydriving.org)
- Being awake for 18 hours is equal to a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08% which is legally drunk and leaves you at equal risk for a crash. (www.drowsydriving.org)

Warning Signs

- ✓ Drifting from lane to lane
- ✓ Yawning repeatedly
- ✓ Difficulty keeping eyes open or focused
- ✓ Cannot remember last few miles driven
- ✓ Tailgating
- ✓ Missing traffic signals
- ✓ Eyelids droop
- ✓ Head nods
- ✓ Blurry vision
- ✓ Day dreaming
- ✓ Feeling restless or irritable

What is it?

Sleepiness - the need to fall asleep

Sleepiness and Driving . . .

- Impairs performance
- Increases chance of falling asleep at the wheel
- Slows reaction time
- Slows vigilance
- Slows attention
- Slows information processing
- Impairs judgment and vision
- Increases aggressive behaviors

Causes:

- Sleep loss

- This can be job related, from lifestyle choices or fragmented sleep...

- Driving patterns

- Usually people who drive between midnight-6 a.m., for long periods of time or in the mid-afternoon, are susceptible to driving drowsy

- Use of sedative medications, antidepressants or antihistamines

- Untreated or unrecognized sleep disorders

- For example, sleep apnea or narcolepsy

- Consumption of alcohol

- This can especially affect the body if you are already tired

Characteristics of a Crash Involving Sleepiness:

- Occurs either late night/early morning or mid-afternoon
- Crash is usually serious
- Single vehicle leaving the roadway
- Occurs on a high speed road
- Driver does not attempt to avoid crash
- Driver is alone in vehicle

*It is difficult to attribute crashes to sleepiness because there is not a standardized test for drowsiness, as there is for drunk driving.



Who's at Risk?

According to the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, there are many groups of people who are at high risk for drowsy driving. Young drivers under the age of 25, especially males, are highly susceptible for losing sleep. Maturational changes and lifestyle behaviors contribute to getting little sleep. People who work long hours, nontraditional hours or work a rotating shift increase their risk for drowsy driving by 6 times. Commercial drivers are also at high risk. DrowsyDriving.Org reports that 15% of all heavy truck crashes are due to driver fatigue. Other groups include people who have undiagnosed or untreated sleep disorders, people who take certain medications that may cause drowsiness and business travelers who might be jet lagged from long trips. Even if you don't fall into one of these high risk categories, we are all at some risk during this time of year. March 9, 2008 marks the beginning of Daylight Saving Time and many of us are affected by that loss of an hours sleep. So if you feel fatigued while you are driving, recognize the signs and pull over!

How to Avoid Driving Drowsy:

- Get enough sleep.
 - Young people need at least 8 ½-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Limit driving between midnight - 6 a.m.
- If you feel drowsy while driving, pull over and take a quick 15-20 minute nap.
- Drinking caffeine can sometimes help.
 - Caffeine needed should be equivalent to 2 cups of coffee.
 - Caffeine takes about 30 minutes to become effective and even then the effects are short lived.
- Make regular stops when on long trips.
 - Every 100 miles or every 2 hours.
 - The best solution is to switch drivers.
- Be sure to begin your trip early in the day.
- Keep the temperature in the car cool.
- Stop for light meals and snacks.
- Drive with your head up, shoulders back and legs flexed at a 45° angle.



Remember!
Opening a window or listening to the radio does not work!



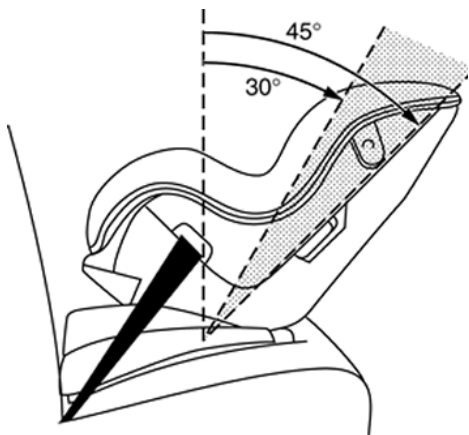
Car Seat Tip of the Day:

Rear Facing Seats

Infant seats are designed to accommodate new born babies usually for children who weigh between 5 and 22 lbs and are less than 26" in height. They are always installed rear facing and are specifically designed to support and cushion an infant's head, neck and spine. Many parents are concerned as to when it is safe to turn their child around into a forward facing car seat. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, for the best possible protection it is recommended to keep infants in the back seat, in a rear facing child safety seat for as long as possible up to the height and weight limits of the particular seat. At a very minimum, it is recommended to keep infants rear facing until at least 1 year old and 20 lbs. Many of the newer car seats on the market are increasing their height and weight limits rear facing. So even if your child has reached 1 year of age, if they are still within the weight and height limits of that car seat, keep them rear facing! An infant is safest rear facing because the whole shell of the car seat is protecting them in a crash, supporting their head, neck and spine. Be sure to always check your car seat stickers and the car seat manual for specific height and weight requirements.

When installing a rear facing seat:

- Be sure to position the car seat at a semi-reclined angle at around 45° from horizontal. If your infant seat does not have an adjustable base, you may use pool noodles or rolled towels (no more than 3) to achieve this angle.
- Make sure the harness straps fall at or just below the infant's shoulders and are snug enough so you cannot pinch any of the webbing at the child's collar bone.
- The harness retainer clip should lay flat against the child's chest at arm pit level.
- Check to make sure the infant's head does not extend beyond the top of the car seat. If it does, you may want to consider a convertible seat for your child. These seats have higher weight and height limits.
- Check the tightness of the installation. The car seat should move no more than 1" from side to side at the belt path.
- Remove any toys that may be hanging off the infant carrier handle. Remove any rear facing mirrors or loose objects in the vehicle. In a crash, these items will become projectiles and can injure your child. Remember if you are going 30 mph so is everything in your vehicle.





Get pumped!

A word about bikes...

Bike tires need to have proper air pressure. Tires with low pressure can make a bike hard to peddle. Low pressure in your tires can also cause the metal part of your wheel to bottom out against pavement if you ride over a pothole or a sharp bump. This can puncture the tube, or it might dent the metal rim of the wheel making the brakes grab. Be aware that it's difficult to fix dents in rims.

So in order to maintain proper pressure, check your tires often. Find the proper number on the side of the tire and pump it up. Proper pressure ranges from 90 PSI for "skinny" tires down to 45 PSI for "fat" tires. It is best to use a bicycle pump with a gauge on it. If you don't have access to one, you can always go to a bike shop where they can properly pump up your tires.

It is not recommended to inflate your tires at a gas station. Gas station air can sometimes deliver the air too quickly to your tires. Not to mention that most gas stations require you to purchase the air and this can become costly for the avid cyclist. Happy riding!

-Submitted by Steven Bard

Cyclist and member of the BMTS Bicycle and Pedestrian
Advisory Committee

The Binghamton Historic Bridge Pedal

July 14, 2008 will mark the 3rd annual Binghamton Historic Bridge Pedal. The event will start at the South Washington Street Bridge and continue on for a 6 mile slow but stimulating bicycle ride all around downtown Binghamton passing historic and picturesque sites. Many local celebrities will be joining us this year. The Historic Society will again guide and enlighten us though the tour route.

Pre-registration is again required for all riders during the month of June. You may register at participating area bike shops. Registration cost for participants is \$2 per rider. Tell your friends! Bring your family! More details to come!

-Submitted by Steven Bard

Cyclists and member of the BMTS Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee



Broome County Traffic Safety Board Announcements

February 11, 2008 - Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study - *Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting*

1:30 p.m.

Broome County Office Building

5th Floor, Planning Department

February 12, 2008 - Child Safety Seat Fitting Station

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Broome County Sheriff's Department (garage area)

Please call (607) 778-2807 to schedule an appointment for a free car seat or to have your car seat inspected by a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician

February 13, 2008 - "Rules of the Road" - *Techniques for Teaching Your Teen to Drive*

7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Chenango Valley Auditorium

This free evening class is open to all parents who are interested in learning about safe driving behaviors, the graduated licensing laws, insurance information and specific methods for teaching their child how to drive.

March 3-9, 2008 - National Sleep Awareness Week

Be aware of Drowsy Driving!

March 13, 2008 - Toddler's Night Out

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Vestal Hills Elementary

Open to all 1-4 year olds and their families who live in the Vestal school district.

Learn about bike and car seat safety as well as lots more!

March 26, 2008 - Broome County Traffic Safety Board Meeting

4 p.m.

Broome County Health Department

All are welcome to attend.

April 14, 2008 - Bicycle Safety Day

11 a.m.

Discovery Center

April 17, 2008 - Child Safety Seat Fitting Station

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Broome County Sheriff's Department (garage area)

Please call (607) 778-2807 to schedule an appointment for a free car seat or to have your car seat inspected by a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician

April 29-May 2, 2008 - Child Passenger Safety Technician Certification Course

Tuesday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Broome County Sheriff's Department

\$60.00 Registration fee (Includes class materials and meals)

Please contact Christine Muss at (607) 778-2807 for registration information.



Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive

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www.safeny.com, New York State Department of Health-Bureau of Injury Prevention,
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