



BROOME COUNTY TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD NEWSLETTER

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Drowsy Driving & Fatigue...A Closer Look

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Drowsy driving is more common than you may think. Study's show that that between 40 and 60 percent of all "run-off-road" crashes are due to driver fatigue, drowsiness or inattention. When you are behind the wheel of a car, being sleepy is dangerous. Although most people know how dangerous drinking and driving is, they may not fully realize that drowsy driving can be just as fatal as driving drunk. Like drugs or alcohol, sleepiness slows reaction time, decreases awareness, impairs judgment and increases your risk of a crash. The Broome County Traffic Safety Board, local Law Enforcement, and Health Department are reminding all motorists that drowsy driving is extremely dangerous and should be taken seriously to avoid unnecessary motor vehicle crashes.

WHAT IS DROWSY DRIVING?

- **Drowsy driving can mean a number of things, including falling asleep while driving or simply not paying attention while driving due to fatigue or lack of sleep.**
- **Much of the research into sleepiness focuses on the human "biological clock".**
- **To be a safer driver, become aware of your own biological clock. What times of day do you feel most alert? What times do you feel most drowsy? Once you are aware of your personal cycle, you can take extra care when you're likely to be feeling sleepy.**



LOOK FAMILIAR?

- **If so, you are placing yourself, family, and fellow motorists at risk of injury or death.**
- **Drowsy driving is a serious issue, just as serious as driving impaired.**
- **Make a conscious effort to avoid this behavior. The life you save could be your own.**

WARNING SIGNS OF DROWSINESS AND FATIGUE

If you:

- can't remember the last few miles driven
- have wandering or disconnected thoughts
- experience difficulty focusing or keeping your eyes open
- have trouble keeping your head up
- drift from lanes or hit a rumble strip
- yawn repeatedly
- tailgate or miss traffic signs
- find yourself jerking your vehicle back into lane



then you may be suffering from drowsiness or fatigue. Continuing to drive in this condition puts you at serious risk of being involved in a fatigue-related crash. You should pull over in a safe place and get some rest before resuming your trip.

If you are planning a long trip, AAA offers the following tips for avoiding fatigue:

- Prepare for your trip by getting a good night's sleep the night before. Plan to drive during the time that you are normally awake, and stay overnight rather than traveling straight through.
- Avoid driving during the body's "down time". According to AAA, this is generally in the mid-afternoon and between midnight and 6:00 a.m.
- If you have passengers, talk to them. It will help to keep you alert, and they will also be able to tell if you are showing signs of getting sleepy.
- Schedule a break every 2 hours or every 100 miles. Take a nap, stretch, take a walk and get some exercise before resuming your trip.
- Stop sooner if you show any danger signs of sleepiness.



For more information on drowsy driving contact Lucas Davis at the Broome County Health Department 607-778-2807.

Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive

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