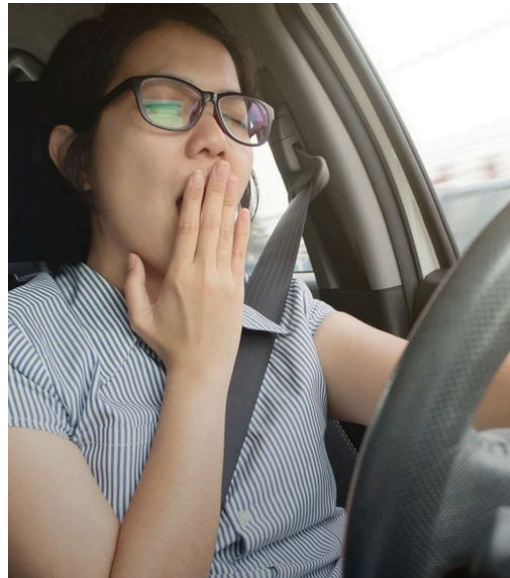
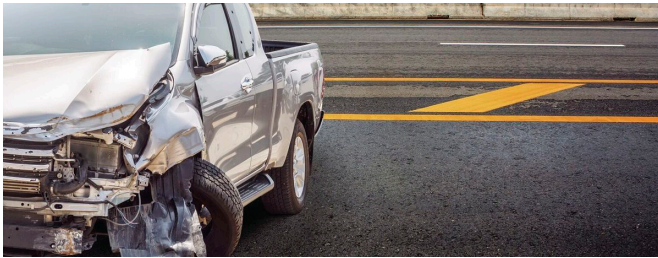


Asleep at the Wheel: Drowsy driving impact

November 26, 2022



Local, state and federal agencies are advising drivers of the impact of driving drowsy.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) census of fatal crashes and estimate of traffic-related crashes and injuries rely on police and hospital reports to determine the incidence of drowsy-driving crashes.

The NHTSA estimates that in 2017, 91,000 police-reported crashes involved drowsy drivers. These crashes led to an estimated 50,000 people injured and nearly 800 deaths.

According to updated information on the NHTSA website, there were 633 deaths from drowsy-driving-related crashes in 2020.

But there is broad agreement across the traffic safety, sleep science, and public health communities that this is an underestimate of the impact of drowsy driving, according to the NHTSA.

Sleepiness can result in crashes any time of the day or night, but three factors are most commonly associated with drowsy-driving crashes.

Drowsy driving crashes:

Occur most frequently between midnight and 6 a.m., or in the late afternoon. At both times of the day, people experience dips in their circadian rhythm—the human body's internal clock that regulates sleep.

Often involve only a single driver (and no passengers) running off the road at a high rate of speed with no evidence of braking; and

Frequently occur on rural roads and highways.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office provides the following information.

It is very important to stay alert while driving at all times, but especially during this time of year since weather conditions can rapidly become hazardous.

Here are several safety tips to keep in mind before hitting the road.

Feeling sleepy is especially dangerous when you are driving. Sleepiness slows your reaction time, decreases awareness, and impairs your judgment just like drugs or alcohol.

People who are very sleepy behave in similar ways to people who are drunk. The impact that drowsy driving has on traffic safety should not be underestimated.

To remain alert and avoid drowsiness:

Getting plenty of sleep (at least six hours) the night before a long trip.

Traveling at times when you are normally awake, and staying overnight rather than driving straight through.

Scheduling a break every two hours or every 100 miles.

Stop driving if you become sleepy; someone who is tired could fall asleep at any time – fatigue impacts reaction time, judgment, and vision, causing people who are very sleepy to behave in similar ways to those who are drunk.

Not planning to work all day and then drive all night

Drink a caffeinated beverage. Since it takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream, find a safe place to take a 20-30-minute nap while you're waiting for the caffeine to take effect

Avoid sleepy times of day. Take a mid-afternoon nap and find a place to sleep between midnight and 6 a.m.

Traveling with an awake passenger.

You are too tired to drive if you're experiencing any or all of the following:

Having trouble keeping your eyes open and focused.

The inability to keep your head up.

Daydreaming or having wandering, disconnected thoughts.

Drifting from your lane or off the road or tailgating.

Yawning frequently or rubbing your eyes repeatedly.

Missing signs or driving past your intended exit.

Feeling irritable and restless.

Being unable to remember how far you have traveled or what you have recently passed.

For more information and tips, visit www.lincolncountysheriff.net