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## Drowsy Driving

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# Supervising Safety Newsletter

### Worker Fatigue and Drowsy Driving

One major thing affecting workers from all over the country, regardless of their position or where they work, is workplace fatigue. Whether employees are going to or leaving work, driving is a part of our daily lives. The National Sleep Foundation conducted a study that found fifty percent of drivers in the United States admit to driving while feeling drowsy or sleep-deprived. Most of us tend to think that being drowsy isn't all that serious, but our reaction speed, coordination, and ability to concentrate are significantly affected. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates that 20% of all auto accidents may be due to driver fatigue.

In a joint effort by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and NIOSH, several studies have shown similarities between fatigue-related impairment in cognitive and physiological function and impairment due to alcohol intoxication. The studies focused on two factors: a person's performance after staying awake for extended periods, and a person's performance after reaching certain blood alcohol concentrations. The results showed that:

**Being awake for 17 hours was similar to having a BAC of 0.05%.**

**Being awake for 25 hours was similar to having a BAC of 0.10%.**

The United States defines legal intoxication for the purpose of driving as a BAC of 0.08% or greater with driving impairments evident at a BAC of 0.05%. The longer we are awake or more sleep deprived, the greater our impairment symptoms. Being drowsy or sleep deprived is a serious matter and we all need to start by taking accountability for the sleep and recovery that our bodies need to function their best. People with sleep

deprivation are ten times more likely to develop depression and 17 times more likely to have significant anxiety.

### What Can Be Done?

We can start by practicing good sleep habits. Stick to a regular sleep schedule and set aside 7 to 8 hours of uninterrupted time for sleep. We should avoid stressful activities and strenuous exercise for at least two hours before bed. Create a sleeping room that is dark, comfortable, and quiet. Avoid the use of alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine to help the body recover from sleep deprivation and fatigue. Find ways to relax, reduce stress, and get more exercise.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy drivers account for over 100,000 automobile crashes and 1,550 fatalities annually. Let's not become next year's statistic. Get enough sleep and never drive drowsy.

