



Guideline on Driver Fatigue and Road Safety

This Guideline has been developed as an aid to members when using private transport for club trips.

There is a significant increase in the risk of you being involved in a crash if you are becoming tired when driving. When you are starting to become tired you can't concentrate on your driving and so you can't respond as quickly and safely as you should. Driver fatigue contributes to more than 20% of road crashes in Victoria.

Causes of fatigue (drowsy driving)

Fatigue can be caused by:

- A lack of quality sleep
- Driving when you would be normally sleeping (overnight)
- Having a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea. Symptoms of sleep apnea include heavy snoring, broken by sudden periods of silence, restless sleep and constantly being tired during the day.

It is important to remember that you can't fight sleep.

Symptoms of fatigue

Fatigue is easy to detect, with symptoms including:

- Yawning
- Sore or heavy eyes
- Slower reaction times
- Finding you're daydreaming and not concentrating on your driving
- Driving speed creeps up and down
- Impatience
- Impaired driving performance such as poor gear changes
- Stiffness and cramps
- Loss of motivation

How fatigue affects your driving

Fatigue has a huge impact on your driving and can affect your ability to drive safely, similar to the effect of drink driving. Research shows that being awake for 17 hours has the same effect on your driving ability as a BAC (blood alcohol concentration) of 0.05. Going without sleep for 24 hours has the same effect as a BAC of 0.1, double the legal limit.

Driving while tired or fatigued can result in:

- Slower reaction times
- Lack of concentration – errors in calculating speed and distance are common
- Reduced vigilance and poor judgement
- Nodding off – even for a few seconds can result in dire consequences

How to beat driver fatigue

If you don't get enough quality sleep you go into debt, basically "owing" yourself more sleep. The only way to repay this debt is by sleeping. Until you catch up on sleep, you have a greater risk of having a fatigue-related crash.

Before you start driving:

- Make sure you regularly get enough sleep.
- Be aware of your biological clock, namely that you are at an increased accident risk when driving between 1 am-6 am and 1 pm-5 pm.
- Don't start a long trip after a long day's work.

When you are driving:

- Take a powernap if tired. Research shows that even a small sleep or powernap of 10 minutes can significantly reduce your chances of a crash caused by fatigue.
- Cool the car interior.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Share the driving whenever possible.
- Take regular breaks – at least every two hours – to help reduce the effects of fatigue.
- Eat proper and well-balanced meals, preferably at your normal meal times.
- Don't travel at times when you'd usually be sleeping.

The only way to address fatigue is by sleeping. Make a choice not to drive when tired.