



Driving on the Right Side of the Road Drowsy Driving



JUST THE FACTS

Did you know?

- A drowsy-driving crash is a crash where the driver was reported as drowsy, sleepy, asleep, or fatigued.¹
- Drowsy driving was reportedly involved in 2.2-2.6% of total fatal crashes annually during 2005-2009 nationwide.²
- In 2009, 832 fatalities that occurred were reported to include drowsy driving.³
- Young drivers are much more likely than adults to be involved in drowsy-driving crashes. Younger drivers age 16-24 were nearly twice as likely to be involved in a drowsy-driving crash as drivers age 40-59.⁴
- 55% of drowsy-driving crashes are caused by drivers younger than 25 years old.⁵
- The loss of one night's sleep can lead to extreme short-term sleepiness, while habitually restricting sleep by one to two hours a night can lead to chronic sleepiness.⁶
- Drowsy driving impairs driving performance and can lead to the inability to resist falling asleep at the wheel, as well as affect reaction time, vigilance, attention, and information processing.⁷
- According to a 2010 survey, two out of every five drivers (41%) admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel at least once, with one in ten saying they've done so in the past year.⁸
- The National Sleep Foundation's 2011 Sleep in America poll found that about one in ten 16-45 year old drivers report driving drowsy once or twice a week.⁹
- More than a quarter of those surveyed admitted that in the previous month, they drove despite being so tired that they had difficulty keeping their eyes open.¹⁰
- Drivers who are so tired that they can hardly keep their eyes open could fall asleep for just a few seconds and not realize it. If that happens at 65 miles an hour, they could drive the length of a football field in an unconscious state.¹¹

The risk:

- Experimental studies suggest that even moderate sleep deprivation, of the sort experienced by the end of a long day, can impair drivers' cognitive abilities comparably to having a blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) at the legal limit of 0.08.¹²
- Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has indicated that there have been about 56,000 crashes in which driver drowsiness/fatigue was cited by police.¹³
- Drowsy driving nearly triples the risk of being involved in a crash or near-crash.¹⁴
- A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study showed that drowsiness is a significant problem that can make drivers four times more likely to be in a crash or near-crash.¹⁵

The cost:

- NHTSA's study conservatively estimated that 100,000 police reported that drowsy driving primarily causes crashes each year and such crashes result in more than 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries, and \$12.5 billion in losses.¹⁶

Drowsy drivers are especially prevalent among these groups:

- Young people (ages 16 to 29), especially males
- Shift workers whose sleep is disrupted by working at night or long, irregular work hours
- People with untreated sleep apnea syndrome or narcolepsy

Factors that increase the risk for drowsy-driving crashes include:

- Sleep loss
- Driving patterns, such as time of day or driving without taking a break

- Use of sedating medications
- Untreated or unrecognized sleep disorders
- Consumption of alcohol

Characteristics of a drowsy driver include:

- Trouble focusing, keeping your eyes open or your head up
- Repeatedly yawning or rubbing your eyes
- Daydreaming and wandering thoughts
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, hitting rumble strips, and missing signs or exits
- Feeling restless, irritable, or aggressive
- Turning up the radio or rolling down the window
- Slower reaction time, poor judgment

Inferential evidence suggests a typical crash involving fatigue includes the following characteristics:

- The problem occurs during late night, early morning, or mid-afternoon
- The crash is likely to be serious
- A single vehicle leaves the roadway
- The crash occurs on a high-speed road
- The driver does not attempt to avoid the crash
- The driver is alone in the vehicle

(Adapted from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, [Drowsing Driving and Automobile Crashes](#)¹⁷)

IT'S THE LAW

Key: P.C. – Penal Code; T. C. – Transportation Code

NAME OF OFFENSE	SECTION OF CODE	PUNISHMENT	COMMENTS
Following Distance	545.062(a), T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	A driver must maintain enough distance in between his or her vehicle and the one in front so that he can safely stop without colliding with the vehicle or veering into another vehicle, object, or person on or near the roadway.
Failed to Keep Right on Mountain Road	545.405(a), T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	A driver moving through a canyon or mountain road must hold the vehicle under control and as near the right-hand edge of the highway as possible.
Drove on Wrong Side of Divided Highway	545.063, T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	On a highway with two or more roadways separated by a space, barrier, or clearly indicated dividing section, a driver must drive on the right roadway unless directed or permitted to use another roadway by an official traffic-control device or police officer.
Failed to Use Due Care for Pedestrian	552.008, T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	A driver of a vehicle must exercise due care to avoid colliding with a pedestrian on a roadway, give warning by sounding the horn when necessary, and exercise proper precaution when he or she sees a child or

			obviously confused or incapacitated person on a roadway.
Failed to Signal Lane Change; Failed to Signal Required Distance before Turning	545.104, T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	A driver shall use a turn signal to indicate an intention to turn, change lanes, or start from a parked position. A driver intending to turn must signal continuously for not less than the last 100 feet of movement before the turn.
Failed to Yield at Stop Intersection	545.151(a); 545.153, T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	An operator approaching an intersection must stop, yield, and grant immediate use of the intersection in obedience of stop light or stop sign.
Speed under Minimum	545.363, T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	A driver may not drive so slowly as to impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic, except when reduced speed is necessary for safe operation or in compliance with the law. If erected signs give notice of a minimum speed limit, a driver may not drive more slowly than the limit except when necessary for safe operation or in compliance with law.
Changed Lane when Unsafe; Failed to Drive in Single Lane	545.060, T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	A driver on a roadway divided into two or more clearly marked lanes for traffic may not move from the lane unless that movement can be made safely. A driver on a roadway divided into two or more clearly marked lanes for traffic must drive as nearly as practical entirely within a single lane.
Failed to Stop for Approaching Train—Hazardous Proximity	545.251(a)(4), T.C.	Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$200	An operator approaching a railroad grade crossing shall stop at least 15 feet (and not further than 50 feet) from the nearest rail if an approaching train is plainly visible and is in hazardous proximity to the crossing.
Reckless Driving	545.401, T.C.	Class B misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$200, up to 30 days in county jail, or both	A person commits reckless driving if the person drives a vehicle in willful or wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property.
Assault with Motor Vehicle	22.01, P.C.	Class A misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$4,000, confinement in jail for up to a year, or both; 3 rd degree felony in some cases punishable by imprisonment 2-10 years and, in addition, fine up to \$10,000	A person commits assault if the person intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causes bodily injury to another. Assault is also committed if a person intentionally or knowingly threatens another with imminent bodily injury.
Aggravated Assault with Motor Vehicle	22.02(b)(3), P.C.	2 nd degree felony punishable by imprisonment up to 20 years and a fine up to \$10,000; 1 st	A person commits aggravated assault if they commit an assault and causes serious bodily injury or uses or exhibits a deadly weapon

		degree felony in some cases punishable by imprisonment up to 99 years and fine up to \$10,000	during the commission of the assault. A car can be considered a deadly weapon: “anything that in the manner of its use or intended use is capable of causing death or serious bodily injury.”
Criminally Negligent Homicide with a Motor Vehicle	19.05, P.C.	State jail felony punishable by up to 2 years in jail and a \$10,000 fine; may be punished as a 3 rd degree felony in some cases	A person commits an offense if he or she causes the death of an individual by criminal negligence.

KEEP IT SAFE

The best way to avoid a drowsy-driving crash is to get adequate sleep on a regular basis, practice good sleep habits, and to seek treatment for sleep problems, should they arise.¹⁸ To locate a safety rest area or travel center, see http://www.dot.state.tx.us/travel/safety_rest_areas/map.htm.

Tips for Drivers:

- Avoid driving alone. If possible, switch drivers and schedule breaks every two hours or every 100 miles.
- Avoid driving during your body’s downtime when sleep is almost irresistible.
- Be well rested by getting enough sleep the night before your trip.
- If you do feel drowsy, pull over to a safe, well-lit place, and take a short 15-20 minute nap.
- Don’t drink and drive.
- Consume caffeine – the equivalent to two cups of coffee may help keep you awake.
- Avoid medications that cause drowsiness as a side-effect.
- If you have narcolepsy or sleep apnea syndrome, seek treatment.

Tips for Passengers:

- If riding as a passenger, help the driver stay awake and watch the road.
(Adapted from AgriLife.org, [Asleep at the Wheel](#)¹⁹)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#)²⁰
- [Asleep at the Wheel](#)²¹
- [Center for the Study of Young Drivers](#)²²
- [DrowsyDriving.org](#)²³
- [National Sleep Foundation](#)²⁴
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)²⁵

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts – Drowsy Driving*, DOT HS 811 449, Retrieved on September 14, 2011 from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811449.pdf> (hereinafter referred to as *Traffic Safety Facts – Drowsy Driving*).

² See *Traffic Safety Facts – Drowsy Driving* – endnote 1

³ See *Traffic Safety Facts – Drowsy Driving* – endnote 1

⁴ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. *Fact Sheet*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/2010DrowsyDrivingFS.pdf>.

⁵ DrowsyDriving.org, *Detection and Prevention*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://drowsydriving.org/about/detection-and-prevention/> (hereinafter referred to as *Detection and Prevention*).

⁶ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2001). *Drowsing Driving and Automobile Crashes*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/drowsy_driving1/drowsy.html (hereinafter referred to as *Drowsing Driving and Automobile Crashes*).

⁷ See *Drowsing Driving and Automobile Crashes*- endnote 3

⁸ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (November 2010), *Two Out of Five Drivers Admit to Falling Asleep at the Wheel, Finds AAA Foundation Study*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=DrowsyDrivingprevalence> (hereinafter referred to as *AAA Foundation Study*).

⁹ DrowsyDriving.org, *National Sleep Foundation's Drowsy Driving Prevention Week Provides Tips to Prevent One in Six Traffic Fatalities*, Retrieved on August 31, 2012 from <http://drowsydriving.org/2011/11/national-sleep-foundation's-drowsy-driving-prevention-week-provides-tips-to-prevent-one-in-six-traffic-fatalities/> (hereinafter referred to as *Drowsy Driving Prevention Tips*).

¹⁰ See *AAA Foundation Study* – endnote 5

¹¹ See *Drowsy Driving Prevention Tips* – endnote 9

¹² See *Detection and Prevention* – endnote 2

¹³ See *Drowsing Driving and Automobile Crashes*- endnote 3

¹⁴ See *Detection and Prevention* – endnote 2

¹⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (April 2006), *The Impact of Driver Inattention On Near-Crash/ Crash Risk: An Analysis Using the 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study Data, Report DOT HS 810 594*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/NRD/Multimedia/PDFs/Crash%20Avoidance/Driver%20Distraction/810594.pdf>.

¹⁶ National Sleep Foundation, *Facts about Driving Drowsy*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://drowsydriving.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/DDPW-Drowsy-Driving-Facts.pdf> (hereinafter referred to as *Facts about Drowsy Driving*).

¹⁷ See *Facts about Drowsy Driving* – endnote 11

¹⁸ See *Facts about Drowsy Driving* – endnote 11

¹⁹ AgriLife.org (2010, July 26). *Asleep at the Wheel*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from

http://fcs.tamu.edu/safety/passenger_safety/articles/asleep_at_the_wheel.php.

²⁰ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety²⁰ (November 2010). *Two Out of Five Drivers Admit to Falling Asleep at the Wheel, Finds AAA Foundation Study*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=DrowsyDrivingprevalence>; and AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. *Fact Sheet*, Retrieved September 1, 2011, from <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/2010DrowsyDrivingFS.pdf>.

²¹ AgriLife.org (2010, July 26). *Asleep at the Wheel*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from

http://fcs.tamu.edu/safety/passenger_safety/articles/asleep_at_the_wheel.php.

²² Center for Study of Young Drivers, *Examining Policies to Reduce Drowsy Teen Driving*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011, from http://www.csyd.unc.edu/projects/drowsy_driving.html.

²³ *DrowsyDriving.org*, *Detection and Prevention*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://drowsydriving.org/about/detection-and-prevention/>.

²⁴ National Sleep Foundation. *Drowsy Driving*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/drowsy-driving>;

National Sleep Foundation, *Facts about Driving Drowsy*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://drowsydriving.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/DDPW-Drowsy-Driving-Facts.pdf>; and

National Sleep Foundation, *2011 Sleep in America Poll: Communications Technology and Sleep*. Washington (DC): The Foundation; 2011 Mar 7. Available from: <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-america-polls/2011-communications-technology-use-and-sleep>.

²⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2001). *Drowsing Driving and Automobile Crashes*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/drowsy_driving1/drowsy.html or

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/sleep/drsy_drv.pdf; and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (April 2006), *The Impact of Driver Inattention On Near-Crash/ Crash Risk: An Analysis Using the 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study Data, Report DOT HS 810 594*, Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/NRD/Multimedia/PDFs/Crash%20Avoidance/Driver%20Distraction/810594.pdf>.