

Fatal factors on the road

Fatigue

Fatigue can play a big part in road trauma. According to WA Police, around 20 lives are lost every year in car crashes with fatigue as a reason.

The Road Safety Commission estimates that up to 70% of crashes resulting in a fatality or serious injury involve symptoms of fatigue, such as making poor decisions, getting distracted or inattention.

How does fatigue play a role in road trauma?

Our body responds to fatigue in different ways. One example of this is 'micro-sleep', where our body falls in and out of sleep. Research states that a micro-sleep can last anywhere from a fraction of a second to a few minutes which is particularly dangerous for a driver behind the wheel.

These brief sleep episodes can have devastating results when it causes a driver to veer off the road, into another vehicle or a vulnerable road user such as a cyclist or pedestrian.

Did you know?

If you were travelling at 100 kilometres per hour on a highway and had a microsleep for 5 seconds, it is the same as driving blindfolded for 139 metres. That's almost the length of 5 basketball courts.



Facts and figures



Being awake for 17 - 19 hours is the equivalent of having a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.05.



Crash reports show 87% of fatigue-related fatal crashes in 2018 occurred in regional WA and most often involved a single vehicle running off the road.



Drivers who have slept only 4 hours in the past 24 hours are 11.5 times more likely to crash than drivers who have slept 7 hours or more.



8-10 hours sleep a night is recommended for a teenager to maintain daytime alertness.



A 20 minute power nap can refresh a driver and temporarily reduce the symptoms of fatigue.



For the better

What are the signs that a driver might be fatigued?

- » Boredom, along with wandering and distracted thoughts.
- » Making mistakes/poor decisions.
- » Nodding off.
- » Yawning.
- » Change in eye blinking rates.
- » No memory of kilometres travelled.
- » Experiencing 'tunnel vision' or loss of concentration.

Did you know?

Fatigue doesn't just affect drivers travelling long distances. It affects all drivers - even if it's a short trip like to the shops or to a mate's house.



Taking action to fight distraction

- » Plan your time to make sure you get plenty of rest the night before driving.
- » Try to avoid driving at night as this is when your body will naturally want to sleep.
- » As a passenger, look out for early and physical warning signs of the driver on all trips, regardless of distance.
- » If you are a passenger and notice warning signs that the driver may be fatigued, let them know you are concerned for their safety, and yours. Come up with another plan to get to your destination safely.
- » Take regular short breaks, ideally before you feel very fatigued. Fuel up with a small nutritious snack (not heavy meals as these can worsen your driving performance).
- » Have a Plan B if you are feeling tired before driving. Why not take a taxi, use a ride-hailing app or have a reliable friend or relative to drive you?

Useful links

Road Safety Commission WA -
[rsc.wa.gov.au](https://www.rsc.wa.gov.au)

Test your Tired Self Interactive Activity (Transport NSW) -
[testyourtiredself.com.au](https://www.testyourtiredself.com.au)



RAC Community Education
communityeducation@rac.com.au