SAFETY TOOLBOX TALK

Week XX: Driving Safety—Driving Drowsy

GENERAL INFORMATION

According to the American Sleep Foundation, about half of U.S. adult drivers admit to consistently getting behind the wheel while feeling drowsy. About 20% admit to falling asleep behind the wheelat some point in the past year – with more than 40% admitting this has happened at least once in their driving careers. These startling figures show how prevalent drowsy driving is. What drivers may not realize is how much drowsy driving puts themselves – and others – at risk. In fact, an estimated 5,000 people died in 2015 in crashes involving drowsy driving

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, every year about 100,000 police-reported crashes involve drowsy driving. These crashes result in more than 1,550 fatalities and 71,000 injuries. The real number may be much higher, however, as it is difficult to determine whether a driver was drowsy at the time of a crash.

A study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety estimated that 328,000 drowsy driving crashes occur annually. That's more than three times the police-reported number. The same study found that 109,000 of those drowsy driving crashes resulted in an injury and about 6,400 were fatal. The researchers suggest the prevalence of drowsy driving fatalities is more than 350% greater than reported.

Beyond the human toll is the economic one. NHTSA estimates fatigue-related crashes resulting in injury or death cost society $109 billion annually, not including property damage.

COMMON SIGNS — *What are common signs of driving tired?*

The following are signs and symptoms of drowsy driving:

- Frequent yawning or difficulty keeping your eyes open
- "Nodding off" or having trouble keeping your head up
- Inability to remember driving the last few miles
- Missing road signs or turns
- Difficulty maintaining your speed
- Drifting out of your lane

PREVENTION — *How do we avoid and incident?*

- Driving when you have properly rested. Recommended 7 hours or more of sleep.
- Driving when you are not normally sleeping. Avoid driving through the night. Even if you have had preparation by getting sleep before, others on the road may have not.
- Keep an eye out on other drivers that my be exhibiting these signs and avoid being around them. If you notice someone having these issues, and it is safe to do so, pull off and call the police to report them. You may get someone in trouble but you may also save someone's life.
- Plan trips that require going through multiple time zones to not exceed your ability.
- Do not take any medications that may result in drowsiness or dizziness.
- Do not take long trips after working long hours or multiple shifts.