

[How Does Fatigued Driving Affect Safety?](#)

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Driving can so easily become part of your daily routine that you can go on autopilot and drive while tired, putting yourself and others at risk. Like with drunk driving, fatigue affects your ability to make good decisions which can lead to accidents. If this happens to you, you may be entitled to compensation, in which case it could be beneficial to contact a personal injury lawyer. In addition to physical injuries, you may also suffer issues concerning your mental health; anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are all likely possibilities that could influence how you work, play and interact with those around you.

But what does it mean to drive while fatigued?

You don't have to pull an all-nighter to have fatigued driving. You may not have had a good night's sleep or might be under the weather. Perhaps you feel emotionally exhausted after dealing with a stressful event. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), late afternoon is the peak time for drowsy driving crashes due to a natural lull in the body's rhythm. To put it simply, all types of tiredness can affect your driving ability.



What are the risk factors for falling asleep at the wheel?

Commercial drivers must follow hours-of-service regulations to avoid fatigued driving. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), those carrying passengers can drive no more than 10 hours at a time, and those transporting property may drive 11. Anyone getting behind the wheel should use good judgment; something as common as taking an allergy medication could lead to drowsy driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration notes that teens are especially prone to fatigue, making them particularly vulnerable in this regard.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) highlights several people more at risk for drowsy driving, including:

- Commercial truck drivers
- Bus drivers
- Drivers who work the graveyard shift
- Drivers at the end of long shifts
- Drivers with sleep disorders

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- Drivers on medications that cause drowsiness.

How can you tell if you're driving fatigued?

At 55 miles per hour, a car can cover up to 100 yards in as little as four seconds. This means that, in such a short time frame, there can be a plethora of dangerous scenarios on the road ahead, such as another vehicle turning into your path, an animal running across the roadway, or vehicles slowing down unexpectedly. To stay safe and prevent potentially catastrophic accidents from occurring, it is crucial for drivers to take note of their own exhaustion levels and know when it is appropriate to rest before getting back behind the wheel. The CDC and NHTSA recommend:

Paying attention to signals.

If a motorist drives over the rumble strip and it jolts them back into alertness, they should take a break.

Watching out for microsleeps.

These are episodes where drivers may drift off for seconds at a time. Even a few seconds of microsleep can cause grievous harm.

Not drifting.

If a motorist can't stay in their lane because they're dozing off, they should pull over.

Noting their itinerary.

Missing an exit or being unable to remember the last few minutes of their trip could point to fatigued driving.

It is not illegal to drive while drowsy, but it is negligent

Driving while tired has similarities to driving while intoxicated, but the approach of enforcement is different. Insurance claims and personal injury claims are separate from criminal proceedings. Even if there are criminal charges in relation to your accident, your civil case against the driver will be distinct since civil suits are based on negligence rather than breaking laws. Therefore, a separate legal action would need to be sought against the cavalier driver for recompense for any harm done to you. A likely criminal case against the worn-out driver would yield no monetary help for the damage caused to you.