

FAQS

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FATIGUE SAFETY TOPIC

Fatigue is the silent killer on our roads. 70% of serious crashes in Western Australia happen because someone may be tired or have a momentary lapse in concentration due to fatigue.

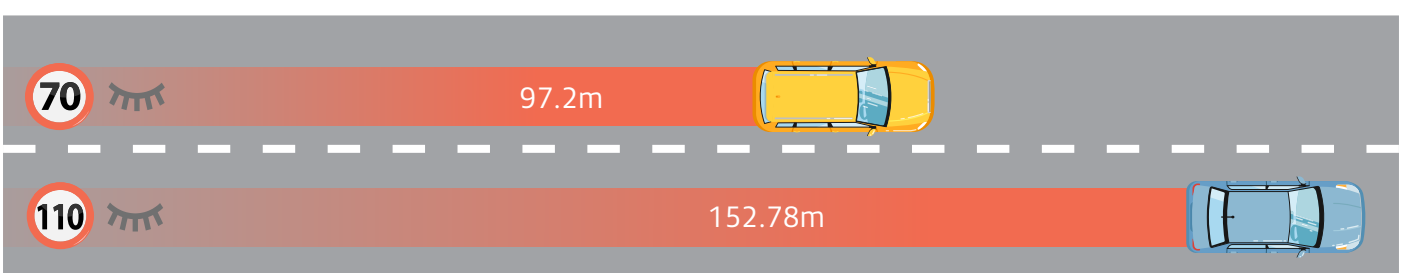


WHAT IS A MICRO-SLEEP?

When you're driving tired, you can drift in and out of sleep without knowing it.

Sleep experts call this a micro-sleep. These can last three to five seconds and are the main cause of fatigue-related crashes where the driver runs off the road.

A micro-sleep of five seconds at 110km/h is like travelling the length of an Aussie rules football field with your eyes closed.

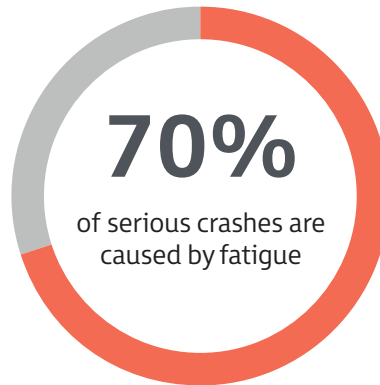




HOW DOES FATIGUE AFFECT MY DRIVING?

As a driver, the risks of fatigue include:

- Slowing your reactions and decisions;
- Decreasing your alertness;
- Decreasing your tolerance for other road users; and
- Poor lane tracking and maintenance of speed.



DOES FATIGUE ONLY AFFECT LONG DISTANCE DRIVERS IN THE COUNTRY?

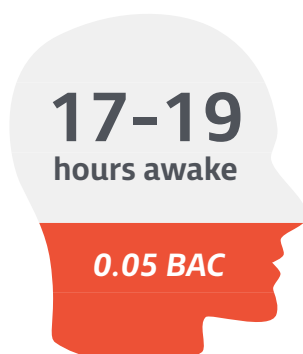
No, all drivers are at risk of driving fatigued. The length of time you have been awake increase your risk of fatigue, so people such as shift workers, students studying and working part time as well as parents who may have been awake with children at night are also at risk. Other factors that may lead to fatigue include:

- Poor quality or lack of sleep;
- Excessive daytime sleepiness;
- Frequent night time driving;
- Use of medication that causes drowsiness;
- Driving for extended periods of time; and
- Air toxic emissions from new motor vehicle interiors.

Driving after being awake for 17-19 hours is equivalent to driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.05.

Driving after being awake for 24 hours is equivalent to driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.10.

Source: A. Williamson and A. Feyer 2000



WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF FATIGUE?

You need to pull over and stop as soon as you notice the early signs of fatigue, because when you feel the physical signs, it may be too late.

Early warning signs include:

- Wandering thoughts;
- Missing a gear, your street or a road sign;
- Not noticing the colour of the last traffic lights;
- Slowing unintentionally; and
- Braking too late.

The physical signs of fatigue are:

- Yawning;
- Blinking more than usual;
- Having trouble keeping your head up;
- Closing your eyes or losing focus; and
- Forgetting driving the last few kilometres.

HOW CAN I COMBAT FATIGUE?

Make sure you are well rested and get plenty of sleep the night before driving.

On long trips have a driving buddy and swap drivers regularly and make regular stops, at least every two hours. If you feel tired behind the wheel, pull over in a safe place and have a power nap of no more than 20 minutes before continuing on your journey.

