



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

NEWS RELEASE

Drowsy Driving

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy and fatigued drivers cause more than 100,000 crashes nationwide each year, injuring at least 40,000 people. “Sleep deprivation and fatigue make inattentiveness and memory lapses more likely to occur. That’s why it’s critical to recognize the risks of drowsy driving and how to prevent it” said the Otsego County Department of Health.

In a 2005 National Sleep Foundation survey, 60 percent of adult drivers admitted to driving while drowsy. More than one third of these drivers reported falling asleep at the wheel, while approximately 2 million drivers admit they had car crashes because they dozed off or were too tired to drive.

People tend to fall asleep on high-speed, long, boring, rural highways. Drivers at highest risk for drowsy driving feel fatigued or sleep-deprived; drive long distances without rest breaks; drive through the night or early morning, or at other times when they are normally asleep; take medications that increase sleepiness or drink alcohol; drive alone; drive on long, rural roads; and/or are frequent travelers, such as business travelers. These at-risk drivers are usually young people, shift workers, commercial drivers and people with undiagnosed sleep disorders.

To decrease the risk of drowsy driving, the National Sleep Foundation encourages drivers to:

- * Get at least eight hours of sleep every night
- * Plan a long trip with a companion who can drive as well as keep the driver alert
- * Schedule stops every 100 miles or two hours
- * Avoid alcohol and medications that impair driving performance
- * Consult with a physician or local sleep disorder center for diagnosis and treatment of frequent daytime sleepiness or nighttime insomnia and loud snoring every night.

Drivers should recognize the warning signs of drowsy driving. Be aware if they can’t remember traveling the last few miles; experience wandering or disconnected thoughts; have difficulty focusing or keeping their eyes open; have trouble keeping their heads up; drift from their lanes or hit a “rumble” strip (deep grooves placed on highway shoulders that drivers hit when they veer off the road); yawn repeatedly; tailgate or miss traffic signs; and/or keep jerking their vehicles back into the lane.

Don’t rely on the radio or open car window to keep you alert. You can’t predict when you will nod off. When you’re tired, stop at a safe place for a break. If possible, take a brief nap; 20-40 minutes is ideal.

For more information on drowsy driving, call Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230, or visit the National Sleep Foundation’s website at www.sleepfoundation.org.