



Institute of Advanced Motorists

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Fact Sheet 15/002

Driver Fatigue

Driver sleepiness is thought to cause at least ten percent of all road accidents and as many as one in four accidents on motorways and trunk roads. Drowsiness is now considered to be a major cause – the killer claiming more lives than alcohol.

Falling asleep at the wheel is increasingly preceded by feelings of increasing sleepiness that drivers are aware of but often ignore. They will wind down the window, turn up the radio, stretch etc, but drive on. Neither these latter methods nor the willpower to stay awake have much effect in overcoming sleepiness. The IAM has prepared this advice:

- Drivers should plan their journeys with the potential problems of **Fatigue** in mind. **Take a break every two hours, regardless if you feel tired or not. Recent research has suggested drivers and car passengers risk DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) after a long journey, which is another good reason to break the journey**
- If they feel tired, drivers should get off the road, find a safe parking place, drink one or two cans of energy drink
- One can of a functional energy drink will almost eliminate this level of sleepiness and sleep related driving impairments for about an hour after being absorbed by the body
- Two cans of a functional energy drink will almost eliminate this level of sleepiness and sleep related driving impairments for 90 minutes after being absorbed. But nevertheless, drivers should get adequate sleep, and not see functional energy drinks as a substitute for sleep.
- Men are more at risk of having a sleep related accident as they drive faster, have an over-confident image of their driving skills and are less likely to stop and take a break if they feel tired
- Most accidents happen between 2-6am and mid afternoon between 2-4pm, when the body's natural clock is set at daily low points. Be aware of the additional risk driving at these times.

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FURTHER INFORMATION FROM VINCE YEARLEY, TEL 0208 996 9600.