

Managing driver fatigue

QFleet driver safety fact sheet

Fatigue is mental or physical tiredness that negatively affects a person's ability to function. It may impair performance by reducing attentiveness, slowing reaction times, affecting judgement and impairing performance of tasks such as driving.

Fatigue is one of the main contributing factors in work-related road crashes. Compared to drivers of non-fleet vehicles, fleet drivers may be at an increased risk of fatigue. It should also be noted that the effects of fatigue are cumulative.

Although the main cause of driver fatigue can be a lack of quality sleep, a number of other factors can also contribute to fatigue such as:

- sustained mental or physical effort
- inadequate rest breaks
- environmental stresses (such as heat, noise and vibration)
- disruption of circadian rhythms (normal cycles of daytime activity and night sleep)
- long periods without sleep
- extended periods of poor quality sleep.

Warning signs

Obvious signs of driver fatigue include:

- feeling tired or sleepy
- lane drifting
- variations in speed
- delayed reactions
- reduced concentration
- constant yawning
- drifting into micro sleeps
- nodding head, lapses in concentration



- heavy or sore eyes, blurred vision
- sweaty hands, impatience
- reduced steering control, the vehicle wanders
- no recollection of the last few kilometres travelled.

The role of the employer

Employers can have a role in minimising driver fatigue and can reduce driving risk by encouraging employees to:

- adopt good journey planning and management practices
- better understand the signs of fatigue
- ensure they have sufficient sleep before driving and do not feel compelled to drive when they are feeling tired
- drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol consumption prior to driving
- take rest breaks with exercise after every two hours of driving
- share the driving
- use alternative modes of transport e.g. flying instead of driving
- avoid driving in the hours when normally asleep e.g. midnight to dawn
- avoid commencing a long trip after a full day's work



- avoid driving long distances after consuming a large meal; light snacks are recommended
- keep the cabin well ventilated and at a comfortable temperature
- keep the mind active, but not distracted e.g. listening to the car radio
- remain alert and avoid getting too comfortable and complacent

- stop and have a power nap
- maintain good levels of health and fitness through good diet and exercise
- avoid medications which cause drowsiness
- avoid using drugs or medication as a means of managing fatigue.

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