

ARTICLE

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Tired Truckers May Create Big Problems For Others On The Road



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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults should get between seven and nine hours of sleep every night. While being drowsy during the workday is an issue for many people, sleep fatigue among commercial truck drivers can result in deadly consequences.

A recent study conducted by the National Sleep Foundation measured the sleep health of transportation workers like truckers, pilots and train engineers and compared their results to employees outside of the transportation industry. The study confirmed that sleep deficits are a real problem among commercial drivers. More than one in 10 of the commercial truckers and other transportation workers surveyed admitted to being dangerously tired while on the job.

A significant number of truck drivers also admitted they rarely or never received enough sleep on work nights. More than 40 percent of truck drivers said they did not get enough sleep and almost 30 percent of other commercial drivers like bus, taxi and limo drivers also admitted to being low on sleep. The lack of sleep among commercial drivers has also led to “near miss” accidents. Almost 15 percent of truck drivers admitted to almost causing a truck accident because of their fatigue.

Commercial drivers often do not get enough sleep because of irregular work hours. According to HealthDay, the lead researcher of the NSF recommends that employers should design schedules that are more conducive to normal sleep patterns to combat sleep fatigue among truck drivers.

Even though drowsiness is a problem among all drivers on the road, tired truck drivers present a greater danger because of the size of the vehicles they drive. The potential threat that semis pose to public safety is a part of the reason why the trucking industry is regulated.

Therefore the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration sets Hours of Service laws that require commercial truck drivers to log work hours and breaks. Truck drivers are subject to daily and weekly work limits.

Truck drivers are allowed to work up to 14 hours in a day, but only 11 hours of that time may be devoted to driving. Once the daily limit is met, drivers are required to be off duty for 10 consecutive hours. Truck drivers may not be on duty for more than 60 hours in seven days or 70 hours in eight days. Drivers may restart the seven or eight day work week after a 34-hour period of no driving.

Unfortunately, despite the good intentions of the law, drivers cannot be forced to rest during off-duty periods, and everyone on the road remains subject to the level of alertness of truck drivers.