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Be safe and healthy on the job with these helpful tips provided by
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Sleep Tips for Truck Drivers

To improve health and safety on the road

Truck drivers spend hours on the road under tight deadlines, so it's no surprise that they consistently struggle to get enough sleep. Unfortunately, a lack of sleep can lead to health problems and safety concerns while driving. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued some tips for drivers on how to avoid the negative consequences of forgoing the sleep they require.

The Importance of Sleep for Your Health

Good sleep is as important for your health as proper nutrition and exercise. Your body is busy repairing wear and tear and getting you in shape for a new day while you sleep. Without enough sleep, you might experience:

- Slower reactions, a cloudy mind or a bad mood
- Weakening of body defenses, which increases your risk for developing infections, high blood pressure and diabetes
- Increased appetite, overeating and obesity

The Importance of Sleep for Your Safety

Driving a truck is a very demanding job. Lack of sleep makes it more difficult to meet the demands of the job and increases your risk for drowsy driving and vehicle crashes. This could mean the difference between stopping on time to avoid a car in front of you or experiencing

a serious, possibly fatal, accident.

Because trucking is a 24/7 job, it keeps you on the road for long periods, and at night it can affect your sleep quality. Creating a relaxing bedtime routine along with a quiet and peaceful environment can improve your sleep.

Where You Sleep Matters

A good sleep environment improves sleep quality. Your sleep environment may depend on your schedule, but you can improve your sleep environment on the road or at home.

- Keep safety in mind. Park with a balance of quiet and safety in mind.
- Block out all light. Close all curtains and truck shades, or use an eye mask.
- Block out noise. Use earplugs or a "white noise" machine like a fan to block out noises. Silence phones and assign an audible ringtone to important contacts to minimize distractions.
- Keep your cab or bedroom temperature comfortable. People's temperature preferences vary, so keep your room temperature comfortable for you.
- Get comfortable. You spend one third of your life in bed, so use a comfortable mattress and pillow. Consider upgrading or replacing the mattress in your sleeper if it is old or uncomfortable.



Common Crash Times

Most drowsy driving crashes or near misses occur during:
4:00 a.m. – 6:00 a.m.
Midnight – 2:00 a.m.
2:00 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Use CAUTION when driving at these times.

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Prepare for Better Sleep

Try to get seven to nine hours of sleep each day; most people need this amount. Be aware of your body's natural feelings of sleepiness. When you are driving, try to plan your stops and sleep breaks to match your natural sleep times. Sleeping around the same time every day helps improve sleep. Getting sufficient and regular sleep will help you fall asleep faster and sleep better in the future. Better sleep will lead to better health and increased alertness. Remember, any exercise during the day that does not take away from sleep time will also improve sleep.

Avoid before bedtime:

- Heavy or spicy meals (two to three hours before bed)
- Liquids (to avoid getting up to use the bathroom), especially alcohol, which causes sleep disturbances
- Caffeine (according to your own sensitivity)—this stimulant can help you stay awake while driving, but remember that it can affect your body for five hours or more, so plan your intake in consideration of how it will affect your quality of sleep
- Nicotine and other stimulants
- Exposure to light from television and electronics (tablets, computers, etc.)—studies show that light from these devices can disturb your sleep

Do before bedtime:

- Explain to family, friends and dispatchers the importance of your sleep, when you will be sleeping and ask them to not disturb you while you are sleeping in order to minimize disruptions.
- Driving a truck is a stressful, demanding job. Follow a relaxing routine within an hour or more of bedtime. This will signal to your brain that it is time to sleep. Brushing your teeth, washing your face and getting undressed for bed will help you relax and fall asleep.

Do You Have a Sleep Disorder?

Sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea and insomnia, are more common than most people realize. See your doctor if you spend seven to nine hours in bed but:

- You consistently take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep;
- You consistently awaken several times during sleep or for long periods;
- You take frequent naps; or
- You often feel sleepy, especially at inappropriate times.

Having a sleep disorder doesn't have to mean going out of service; simple changes may lessen symptoms. Learn more at

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/healthy_sleep.pdf.

Source: CDC



Sleep Apnea Prevalence

Sleep apnea is a serious breathing-related sleep disorder estimated to affect 3 out of every 10 commercial drivers, according to the FMCSA. The disorder causes pauses in breathing during sleep, which significantly affects quality of sleep and can lead to excessive daytime drowsiness and fatigue. Because of these side effects, sleep apnea increases the chance that a driver will fall asleep behind the wheel and cause an accident.

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