

Too tired to drive - advice from the IAM Trust

Motorists are too often prepared to ignore the effects of tiredness and just drive on, according to a survey released today (13 September 2007).

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) calls driver fatigue a silent killer and in a sense that is just what it is.

Fatigue is a natural phenomenon and one we learn to accept almost from birth. However when combined with a mentally and physically demanding task such as driving, it is a potential killer, said IAM Motoring Trust Head of Road Safety Kevin Delaney.

Mr Delaney said that fatigue operates in much the same way as alcohol. Drivers who are slightly tired will not drive as well, or as safely as those who are fresh.

As tiredness increases, mental and physical performance falls off until eventually the driver falls asleep, he said.

An estimated one in five motorway crashes is related to driver fatigue, although statistics are limited: drivers who are tired are seldom willing to admit it and those who crash are often too badly injured to recall the events leading to the collision. However it is clear that there are far too many serious collisions arising from driver fatigue.

The IAM says that although fatigue is unavoidable, there are a number of simple steps we drivers can take to minimise the risk:

Start fresh

- Get plenty of rest before a long journey, don't drive if you feel tired, or unwell.
- Wear comfortable loose clothing
- Adjust the driving seat to a comfortable upright position and adjust the heating/air conditioning to a cool not cold temperature.

Stay fresh

- Take regular breaks, every 1 to 2 hours depending on the driving conditions.
- Get out of the car and walk around
- Drink a caffeine rich drink such as coffee.

If you feel tired

- Act quickly, don't try to drive through fatigue, don't turn up the radio volume and don't open the window or turn the aircon to the coldest setting in the hope that these will keep you awake - they won't.
- Find a safe place to stop, take a short nap, at least 20 minutes, get some fresh air and exercise and have a caffeine rich drink.
- If you feel more awake continue, but bear in mind that you will have to stop soon. If you still feel tired, sleep until you feel fresh enough to continue.

ENDS

Issued by the IAM Motoring Trust. For more details please contact 020 8996 9777 (press inquiries)

We have ISDN lines for interviews.