

Safety Alert

No: 64 Driver Fatigue



What happened?

- An employee was driving home after working a nightshift when he fell asleep at the wheel.
- The vehicle left the road and collided with concrete sleepers.
- Fortunately only the vehicle was damaged and no injuries were sustained.

The Facts

- Research suggests that almost 20% of accidents on major roads are sleep-related.
- Sleep-related accidents are more likely than others to result in a fatality or serious injury.
- Peak times for accidents are in the early hours and after lunch.
- About 40% of sleep-related accidents involve commercial vehicles.
- Men under 30 have the highest risk of falling asleep at the wheel.

What can drivers do to prevent similar incidents?

- Remember to dynamically risk assess your ability to drive safely considering the potential effects of any medication your general fitness, state of mind and levels of fatigue/tiredness.
- Plan your journey to include a 15-minute break every two hours of continuous driving and add a sensible margin to your expected travel time.
- Always take your allocated lunch break.
- If you start to feel sleepy, find a safe place to stop - not the hard shoulder of a motorway and have a rest – **Remember to inform your Line Manager that you need to stop for a rest.**
- If you still have a long distance to travel at night and your tiredness affects safe driving consider booking into a reasonably priced hotel to get a proper rest.
- Share driving where possible.
- Always try to get the recommended 7 to 8 hours sleep per night.
- Remember, the only real cure for sleepiness is proper sleep. A caffeine drink or a nap is a short-term solution that will only allow you to keep driving for a short time.

Driver responsibility

All drivers have a responsibility for their own safety, the safety of their passengers and all other road users; drivers must ensure that they are physically capable to drive which includes fatigue.

Some practical tips for minimising stress and fatigue whilst driving can be found in your UK Driver's Handbook.

Remember: If the driver of the vehicle is aware of any medical, other physical restrictions or any other reason that may affect their ability to carry out driving activities in a safe manner, they have a duty to inform their line manager of such restrictions.

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Action for Managers/Team Leaders:

- Please ensure all relevant personnel are aware of this incident and preventive actions; this Safety Alert is to be documented at your next Team Brief.
- Line Managers to familiarise themselves with the Work Related Driving Process (IMSP 4.09). Its objective is to ensure that all work related driving is managed, so far as is reasonably practicable, to a level where the risks to our employees and others who may be affected by their driving is minimised.
- Line Managers to ensure that all employees expected to drive during the course of their work is provided with:
 - The RPS Group Road Risk Policy
 - The RPS Drivers Handbook
 - The RPS Group Mobile Phone Policy
 - RPS Site Based Working Risk assessment (Ref: GR001)
 - RPS Site Based Working Safe System of Work (Ref: SSW01)
- Driver Risk Assessment and Training:
 - Ensure each employee driving on behalf of RPS possess an “RPS Permit to Drive”.
 - Ensure all drivers have received BRAKE Driver Awareness training.
- Line Managers must assess your team’s driving requirements (times and distances) within current workloads and minimise where possible by considering: shared driving, overnight stays, adequate driving break periods, alternative methods of travel, allocation of tasks based on vicinity and other job planning initiatives.
- Encourage staff to take their allocated rest periods.
- Ensure working times are not excessive and comply with Working Time Regulations as summarised here:
 - **Maximum Weekly Working Time:**
 - In a 17-week period (which may be extended with the employee’s agreement), no employee is permitted to work more than an average of 48 hours per week.
 - In a 17-week period, employees working during the night are subject to a working time limit of an average of 8 hours in each 24-hour period. Employees working during the night whose work involves special hazards or heavy physical or mental strain are subject to an 8-hour limit for each 24-hour period. Employees working at night are also entitled to free health assessments before commencement and periodically thereafter.
 - Up-to-date records must be kept of all employee hours worked and therefore all employees are required to complete timesheets as requested. Health assessment checks should be recorded on the employee’s medical record and should be kept on their personnel file and a copy sent to HR.
 - **The statutory entitlements for rest breaks are as follows:**
 - 20-minute rest break provided that the working day is longer than 6 hours
 - 11 consecutive hours’ rest in every 24-hour period.
 - A right to an uninterrupted weekly rest period of at least 24 hours in each 7 day period, two periods of 24 hours in each 14 day period, or one period of 48 hours in each 14 day period.
 - There are more stringent regulations for employees under the age of 18. (Contact HR for further guidance)