



# Trucking Risk Advisor

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## Dealing With Driver Fatigue

Fatigue occurs when an individual does not get enough sleep or quality sleep. It can impair one's ability to safely perform tasks, including driving. Driver fatigue may be triggered by a lack of adequate sleep, long work hours, strenuous work or non-work activities—or a combination of other factors.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) found that fatigue was a critical factor in 13% of all commercial vehicle crashes. Drivers who operate for more than eight hours straight are more likely to be in a fatigue-related crash than those who take regular breaks, although fatigued driving is just as much of a danger whether driving short or long distances.

Signs of driver fatigue include:

- Blurry vision
- Excessive nodding
- Inability to keep eyes open
- Errors in measuring distance or speed
- Increase in making smaller mistakes (like missing an exit)
- Decreased alertness and ability to concentrate
- Not refreshed by longer sleep sessions

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Commercial fleets can be proactive about managing driver fatigue. Consider the following strategies to help commercial drivers minimize fatigue while on the road:

- **Provide sleep education**—Train employees and managers on fatigue warning signs and emphasize the risks of fatigue-related crashes and injuries. According to the FMCSA, more than 28% of truck drivers have sleep apnea. Consider offering sleep apnea screenings.
- **Launch a wellness program**—Encourage healthy eating and sleeping habits in and out of the workplace. Good nutrition leads to your body being more awake and alert. Take overall well-being into consideration by offering mental health and stress management screenings and support.
- **Schedule efficient and safe routes**—Set schedules that do not encourage drivers to work when they are fatigued. Often, there are tight deadlines to consider, but it's also important to keep in mind which of your employees are driving long-haul routes too often. Tight deadlines may also result in speeding. Fatigue and speeding are a potentially deadly combo.
- **Encourage power naps**—Taking naps right before hitting the road can help drivers stay more focused. Encourage drivers to lay down for a 20-minute power nap. Although short, a power nap is just enough to make people feel alert before starting their route.

Whether or not your team is regularly doing long-distance hauls, fatigue is an important topic to understand and address. As an employer, you have the opportunity to help your drivers identify signs of fatigue to lower the risk of accidents. Ultimately, everyone has a responsibility to stay safe on the road.