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Daylight Savings Increases Risk of Drowsy Driving

**National Road Safety Foundation offers tips to stay alert at the wheel;
Study shows 1/3 of drivers admit to falling asleep at the wheel**

NEW YORK, March 5, 2026 -- Daylight savings time begins Sunday morning, and traffic safety experts warn of an increased risk of drowsy driving crashes. Drowsiness is a significant factor in crashes nationwide. A study released last week by the Governors Highway Safety Association says drowsy driving killed more than 6,300 people on our roads and highways in 2023, which is considerably higher than previous estimates.

The National Road Safety Foundation cautions drivers to be especially aware of driver fatigue as daylight savings begins, since the time change can disrupt normal sleep patterns and lead to drowsiness.

"Drowsy driving can be as dangerous as drinking and driving," said Michelle Anderson of The National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit organization that produces and distributes free driver safety education materials. "Studies have shown that being awake for 18 hours can impair you equivalent to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 percent."

Drowsy driving is a factor in more than 300,000 crashes every year, causing 109,000 injuries and more than \$30 billion in losses, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. An estimated 83 million sleep-deprived Americans are behind the wheel on a typical day, and studies show nearly two-thirds of motorists have driven while fatigued and more than a third admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel.

Sleep experts say the brain may compensate for fatigue by taking micro-sleeps for a few seconds or longer. During a three- or four-second micro-sleep, a person's eyes may remain open, but the brain is not processing the eyes' vision signal. A car at highway speed can travel the length of a football field during those few seconds, veering out of its lane and into oncoming traffic or off the road. Sleep-induced crashes often cause very serious injuries, since a dozing driver may not take evasive or corrective action as the vehicle leaves its lane.

Drivers should recognize the signs of drowsiness:

- Difficulty focusing

- Frequent blinking
- Not remembering the last few miles driven
- Head nodding
- Repeated yawning or rubbing eyes
- Drifting out of lane, tailgating or going over rumble strips.

"Some commonly held reliefs for drowsiness, like rolling down the windows or blasting the radio, simply don't work if you are sleep-deprived," Anderson said. "The best thing is to find a safe spot to pull over and take a break and, if possible, take a 20-minute nap. Have a cup or two of coffee or a caffeinated snack and allow 30 minutes for the caffeine to enter the bloodstream. Don't drink alcohol or take medications, which can cause drowsiness."

Information about drowsy driving, including a personal "Sleep Diary," is available at no charge from www.nrsf.org/resources/drowsy-driving

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that for more than 60 years has been dedicated to reducing crashes, deaths and injuries on our nation's highways by promoting safe driving habits through greater public awareness.

NRSF produces documentaries, educational programs and public service campaigns for broadcast and for use in safety, educational and enforcement programs by police, teachers, traffic safety agencies, healthcare professionals, youth advocacy groups and other grass-roots related agencies, as well as federal, state and local government agencies. NRSF programs, which are free, deal with distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency and pedestrian safety. The Foundation also works with national groups like GHSA, the National Safety Council, ADTSEA as well as youth advocacy groups including SADD, FCCLA, Impact Teen Drivers, and Teens in the Drivers Seat. NRSF sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities, working with safety partners and with auto shows in Chicago and Detroit. For information or to download free programs, visit www.nrsf.org.

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