

DROWSY DRIVING DANGEROUS TO ALL DRIVERS

Drowsy driving is a serious issue that affects all drivers, but unfortunately doesn't get the same attention as driving while impaired or distracted driving. It is estimated that over 6,000 fatal crashes per year are due to drowsy driving. Stony Brook University, New York, has launched a new website: StopDrowsyDriving.org.

The website was created by faculty members from Stony Brook University's School of Health Technology and Management and funded with grants by the Governors Highway Safety Association, the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, and the National Road Safety Foundation.

StopDrowsyDriving.org is dedicated to improving roadway safety by reducing the incidence of drowsy driving through education and research. The goal is to raise awareness about the dangers of drowsy driving, help individuals realize their own level of sleepiness, and promote healthy strategies to reduce drowsy driving in New York State.

Site visitors can take the Epworth Sleepiness Assessment. Go to the web site and try it – I did, and, if you answer the questions truthfully, it seems to be accurate. The ultimate goal is to have participants make positive changes in their sleep health, reducing the likelihood of falling asleep at the wheel, and decrease the number of crashes due to drowsy driving.

Here are some important findings about drowsy driving:

- An estimated 328,000 crashes each year involve a drowsy driver.
- Men have twice as many Drowsy Driving crashes as women.
- More than half of Drowsy Driving crashes involve drivers drifting out of their lanes. That's why rumble strips significantly improve safety.
- With only 5 to 6 hours of sleep, crash risk increases by nearly two times compared to 7 hours of sleep.

From the website, the likelihood of drowsy driving, by age, is also interesting. Younger drivers are significantly more likely to drive drowsy – 71 % for drivers aged 18-29 versus only 19 % for drivers 65 and older.

Let's be blunt — Drowsy Driving is as deadly as drunk driving. It has the same effects as excessive alcohol consumption — including slower reaction time, blurred vision and overall disorientation. Sadly, most Americans aren't concerned with the effects of Drowsy Driving, because they tend to believe a multitude of myths that have developed over the years. Go the website <http://stopdrowsydriving.org/> and check out the myths – you might be surprised.

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