

Contact: David Reich 212-573-6000
david@reichcommunications.com

DROWSY DRIVING RISK JUMPS AS DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS

Watch for signs of drowsiness while driving, says The National Road Safety Foundation

NEW YORK, Oct. 28, 2015 -- Streets and highways throughout the nation become more dangerous early Sunday morning when clocks are pushed back an hour for the end of daylight savings time. The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF), a non-profit group that produces free driver safety programs, warns drivers that the time change increases the likelihood of drowsy driving.

"Drowsy driving is a significant cause of traffic crashes, with fatigue a factor in more than 100,000 crashes every year," says David Reich of the National Road Safety Foundation. "Many experts say drowsy driving is as dangerous as drunk driving, in terms of the risk of serious injury or death to the driver and passengers."

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that fatigue-related crashes result in at least 1,500 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses each year.

Drowsy driving crashes often result in serious injuries. They frequently involve a single vehicle that leaves the roadway, and the dozing driver doesn't attempt corrective action to avoid a crash.

Studies show more than 60 percent of U.S. motorists have driven while fatigued, and nearly 37 percent admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel. At highway speeds, a driver who dozes for only four or five seconds can travel more than the length of a football field, crossing into oncoming traffic or off the road and into a tree.

Drowsy driving is especially prevalent among teens, who tend to keep late hours and think they can function on minimal sleep. Teens require more sleep than adults, experts say.

The National Road Safety Foundation urges drivers to be alert to these signs of drowsiness while driving:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, rubbing eyes
- Daydreaming or not remembering the last few miles driven
- Head snaps and yawning

- Drifting out of your lane, tailgating or hitting rumble strips

If you experience any of these warning signs, pull over safely and take a break. Have a cup of coffee or a caffeinated snack or take a 20-minute nap. Allow 30 minutes for caffeine to enter your bloodstream. Never drink alcohol before driving and know if any medications you take might induce drowsiness.

"Don't try to tough it out," says Reich. "Fatigue can force you into 'micro-sleeps' lasting several seconds, which can have devastating results. We've seen too many examples of people trying to make it those last few miles, only to crash a block from home."

NRSF has a free program dealing with drowsy driving, which includes a 16-minute video titled "Almost Home" and a drowsiness self-assessment quiz. Both can be downloaded free at www.nrsf.org or www.teenlane.org.

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization founded more than 50 years ago, produces traffic safety programs on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, pedestrian safety and a host of other safety issues. It distributes the programs free of charge to schools, police and traffic safety advocates, community groups and individuals. It also sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities.

* * *

10-28.2015