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## Missing 2 to 3 hours of sleep has same crash risk as driving drunk, finds AAA report



Chance of incident increases steadily with fewer hours slept

Drivers who miss between one to two hours of the recommended seven hours of sleep in a 24-hour period nearly double their risk for a crash, according to new research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

“You cannot miss sleep and still expect to be able to safely function behind the wheel,” said David Yang, executive director for the foundation, based in Washington, D.C. “Our new research shows that a driver who has slept for less than five hours has a crash risk comparable to someone driving drunk.”

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety’s report, *Acute Sleep Deprivation and Risk of Motor Vehicle Crash Involvement*, reveals that drivers missing two to three hours of sleep in a 24-hour period more than quadrupled their risk of a crash compared to drivers getting the recommended seven hours of sleep. This is the same crash risk the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) associates with driving over the legal limit for alcohol.

The report found that in a 24-hour period, crash risk for sleep-deprived drivers increased steadily when compared to drivers who slept the recommended seven hours or more:

- Six to seven hours of sleep: 1.3 times the crash risk
- Five to six hours of sleep: 1.9 times the crash risk
- Four to five hours of sleep: 4.3 times the crash risk
- Less than four hours of sleep: 11.5 times the crash risk.

Nearly one in three people surveyed by the foundation admit that at least once in the past month they drove when they were so tired they had a hard time keeping their eyes open.

“Managing a healthy work-life balance can be difficult and far too often we sacrifice our sleep as a result,” said Jake Nelson, director of traffic safety advocacy and research for AAA. “Failing to maintain a

healthy sleep schedule could mean putting yourself or others on the road at risk.”

Symptoms of drowsy driving can include having trouble keeping eyes open, drifting from lanes or not remembering the last few miles driven. However, more than one-half of drivers involved in fatigue-related crashes experienced no symptoms before falling asleep behind the wheel, said AAA.

For longer trips, AAA recommends that drivers:

- Travel at times when normally awake
- Schedule a break every two hours or every 100 miles
- Avoid heavy foods
- Travel with an alert passenger and take turns driving
- Avoid medications that cause drowsiness or other impairment.

The AAA Foundation report is based on the analysis of 7,234 drivers involved in 4,571 crashes. All data is from the NHTSA’s National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey which comprised a sample of police-reported crashes that involved at least one vehicle that was towed from the scene and resulted in emergency medical services being dispatched to the scene.