

driver
tiredness



inside we cover...

How to recognise **the warning signs**

What you should do

The **law**



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What are the dangers?

- Driver tiredness is one of the biggest killers on our roads, where it **causes one in five crashes**.
- Crashes caused by drivers falling asleep at the wheel tend to be **high-speed crashes**, because drivers do not break before crashing.

The Law

If you kill someone when tired behind the wheel, you may be charged with death by dangerous driving, which has a maximum penalty of **14 years in prison**.

What can I do to prevent tiredness?

- **Get enough sleep** – too little sleep radically affects our ability to drive safely.
- **Inform your employer** - if you are having trouble sleeping and/or taking medication that can make you drowsy.
- **Always drive carefully and calmly** - working hard to identify all possible hazards ahead. This will help prevent boredom and stress and will reduce the risk of tiredness.
- **Stay alert on monotonous roads** – be especially alert on roads such as motorways. You may be particularly at risk if you drive a vehicle with cruise control, which can make driving more comfortable and lulling.
- **Watch out for dangerous times** – research shows that most drivers with normal sleep patterns are more likely to fall asleep between midnight-6am and 2pm-4pm, when your biological clock dips.
- **Take regular breaks** – the Government recommends that you take a break at least every two hours for at least 15 minutes.





Did you know?

300 people are killed each year as a result of drivers falling asleep at the wheel

7% of drivers surveyed admitted to falling asleep at the wheel in the past year

78% try ineffective measures to combat tiredness such as opening a window or listening to the radio

If you kill someone when tired behind the wheel, you may be charged with death by dangerous driving, which has a maximum penalty of **14 years in prison**.

What are the warning signs?

- Difficulty concentrating
- Yawning
- Heavy eyelids
- Eyes starting to “roll”
- Neck muscles relaxing, making your head droop

Someone driving on a motorway at **70mph** who **nods off for six seconds** would travel more than **200 metres** in that time.

Microsleeps

Drivers who ignore the signs and try to fight sleep often experience **‘microsleeps’**. This is when you nod off for 2 to 30 seconds without realising or remembering it, often recalled as ‘head-nodding’.

Although only brief, microsleeps can be fatal as they render you oblivious to your surroundings, and unable to react to the road ahead.

Someone driving on a motorway at 70mph who nods off for six seconds would travel more than 200 metres in that time.

What you should do

- If you feel tired when driving, **do not try to fight it off**. Sleep ensues faster than you think. It is vital that you stop in a safe place (never on the hard shoulder) as soon as possible to take a break.
- When you stop the Government recommends you:-
 - **drink two cups of coffee** or, ideally, a high caffeine drink. Caffeine however is only temporary (60-90 minutes).
 - take a **ten-minute snooze**.
 - **if you are still too tired, do not drive on**.
- **Tiredness should never be tackled by** carrying on driving, turning up the radio, talking to a passenger or winding the window down. These measures do not prevent sleep.

