

Important Thanksgiving driving tip: You snooze, you lose.

SALT LAKE CITY (November 25, 2015) - As families and friends gather to give thanks this year, SleepSmartDriveSmart reminds travelers to prioritize safe driving and never drive drowsy. Too often the stressful days leading up to Thanksgiving leave many Utahns fatigued and dangerous behind the wheel.

“No one expects to get in a crash traveling for Thanksgiving. But if you drive sleepy, it can happen to you,” said Robyn LaLumia of the Utah Department of Public Safety’s Highway Safety Office. “Please remember, no matter how much caffeine, music, food or conversation, sleep prevails with deadly consequences.”

You are at risk of driving drowsy if you are:

- Sleep-deprived or fatigued (six hours of sleep or less triples your risk)
- Driving on a long, rural or dark road
- Driving through the night, mid-afternoon or when you would normally be asleep
- Taking sedating medications (e.g., antidepressants, cold tablets, antihistamines)
- Working more than 60 hours a week (increases your risk by 40 percent)

When feeling drowsy, drivers should find a safe spot to pull over, then:

- Switch drivers.
- Take a 10- to 20-minute nap.
- Get out of the car and stretch or jog for a few minutes.
- Find a safe place to sleep for the night.

“We live in a fast paced world where we often cram 36 hours worth of work into 24, and then drive late at night to reach our vacation destination,” Ms. LaLumia said. “People forget the important fact: Our lives depend on sleep and so does our driving. Never risk your life, or the lives of those you love, by driving drowsy.”

Zero Fatalities recently released a video highlighting the dangers of drowsy driving, associated with holiday travel. “Remembering Madeline” relays the story of BYU students: Taylor, Bailee and “Madie” Morris who, while traveling home for Thanksgiving, fell victim to drowsy driving. Taylor and Bailee survived, while their little sister and college freshman Madie was killed in the crash. You can see the video here: <https://youtu.be/bTb0hCt9FEI>

In 2014, 1,041 motor vehicle crashes occurred in Utah involving a drowsy driver. Over the past ten years, 187 people have died in drowsy driver crashes in Utah. According to a Utah Department of Public Safety poll: In 2009, 97 percent of adult Utah motorists admitted that driving while severely drowsy is a major threat, yet 44 percent say they have fallen asleep or nodded off while driving.

“Know your body, if you are fatigued don’t risk your life, or the lives of others,” Ms. LaLumia said. “Thanksgiving is about being with family, so make sure you arrive alive.”

The long Thanksgiving weekend is one of the busiest travel times of the year, which increases the risk of being involved in a serious or deadly car crash. AAA predicts this Thanksgiving holiday will be the busiest for travel since 2007. Forty-seven million Americans are anticipated to travel at least 50 miles from home from Wednesday through Sunday. For drowsy driving statistics, facts, videos and more - visit sleepsmartdrivesmart.com or www.zerofatalities.com

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