



# Safety Culture

## ***Almost One out of Three Drivers Admit to Drowsy Driving in Last Month, AAA Foundation Study Finds***

Washington, D.C. — Nearly all drivers (96 percent) feel drowsy driving is an unacceptable behavior, yet almost a third (32 percent) admitted driving when they were so tired that they had difficulty keeping their eyes open in the past month, according to the [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#)'s 2011 safety culture survey. A study released last year by the AAA Foundation found that one of every six deadly crashes and one in eight crashes causing serious injury involved a drowsy driver. This is substantially higher than previous estimates, confirming the suspicions of researchers that the impact of drowsy driving on motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and deaths has been greatly underestimated.

“Although the vast majority of drivers recognize the serious threat of drowsy driving, a ‘*Do as I Say, Not as I Do*’ attitude exists when getting behind the wheel. Drowsy driving kills, just as sure as drunk, drugged and distracted driving does,” said AAA Foundation President and CEO [Peter Kissinger](#). “Drivers have a tendency to underestimate the impact being tired has on their driving ability, which puts themselves and others at risk.”

In recognition of this year's [Drowsy Driving Prevention Week](#)<sup>®</sup>, hosted by the [National Sleep Foundation](#), the AAA Foundation and AAA want to raise awareness among all drivers of the seriousness of this deadly, yet far too common driving practice.

Recent AAA Foundation research on drowsy driving found that two out of every five drivers (41 percent) admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel at some point, with one in 10 saying they had done so in the past year. “What’s so alarming is that over half of these drivers reported having fallen asleep while driving on high-speed roads,” said AAA’s Director of Traffic Safety Advocacy and Research Jake Nelson. “These data underscore the importance of educating drivers about the dangers of drowsy driving.”

For more than two decades, the National Sleep Foundation has worked to raise drowsy driving awareness and related education.

“It is shocking to consider that nearly a third of drivers admit to operating a vehicle in the last month while drowsy,” said David Cloud, CEO of the National Sleep Foundation. “We applaud AAA’s work to call attention toward this important public safety issue.”

Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.



## Warning Signs and Safety Tips

Warning signs of sleepiness include, but are not limited to:

- Having difficulty keeping your eyes open and focused, and/or having heavy eyelids
- Difficulty keeping your head up
- Drifting from your lane, swerving, tailgating, and/or hitting rumble strips
- Inability to clearly remember the last few miles driven
- Missing traffic signs or driving past your intended exit
- Yawning repeatedly and rubbing your eyes
- Feeling irritable or restless

To remain alert and prevent a fall-asleep crash, AAA offers these tips:

- Get plenty of sleep (at least seven hours) the night before a long trip
- Stop driving if you become sleepy; someone who is tired could fall asleep at any time – fatigue impacts reaction time, judgment and vision, causing people who are very sleepy to behave in similar ways to those who are drunk
- Travel at times when you are normally awake, and stay overnight rather than driving straight through
- Schedule a break every two hours or every 100 miles
- Drink a caffeinated beverage. Since it takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream, find a safe place to take a 20-30 minute nap while you're waiting for the caffeine to take effect
- Travel with an awake passenger

For more information on drowsy driving, including the Foundation's brochure, [How To Avoid Drowsy Driving](#), visit [www.AAAFoundation.org](http://www.AAAFoundation.org).

###

*The AAA Foundation's fourth annual Traffic Safety Culture Index was conducted June 6 – 28, 2011 by Knowledge Networks for the AAA Foundation, with a nationally representative sample of 3,147 U.S. residents ages 16 and older using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population.*

*Established by AAA in 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. The Foundation's mission is to prevent crashes, reduce injuries, and save lives on our roads through research and education about traffic safety. The Foundation has funded over 200 research projects designed to discover the causes of traffic crashes, prevent them, and minimize injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop dozens of focused, high-impact educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit [www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org) or [www.facebook.com/AAAFTS](http://www.facebook.com/AAAFTS) for more information on how you can support our cause.*

*As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides more than 51 million members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. AAA clubs can be visited on the Internet at [AAA.com](http://AAA.com).*