Poster: Driving tired = driving drunk

Fatigue and work diary - checked 8 Nov 2026

Being awake for 17 hours affects your performance about as much as a blood alcohol reading of 0.05. After 24 hours awake, it's like 0.10. Tired drivers react slower, miss things and can have microsleeps. If you're tired, don't drive. Download the poster and put it up where your drivers will see it.

What the research found

Australian researchers Drew Dawson and Kathryn Reid compared staying awake with drinking alcohol. After 17 hours awake, people performed about as badly as they did at a blood alcohol reading of 0.05. After 24 hours awake, it was like 0.10. Later Australian research by Ann Williamson and Anne-Marie Feyer found similar results.

Truck drivers have a lower limit

0.05 is the limit for most car drivers. The limit for truck drivers is lower - zero in most states. In Queensland, it's zero for any vehicle over 4.5 t GVM. Check the limit where you drive. So 17 hours awake can leave you more impaired than you'd ever be allowed to be from alcohol.

What fatigue does to your driving

- Slower reaction times
- Less awareness of what's around you
- Poor decisions
- Microsleeps - a few seconds asleep at the wheel, often without knowing it
- A higher chance of a crash

If you're tired

1. Stop

Pull over somewhere safe as soon as you can.

2. Rest

Take a break or a sleep. Coffee and fresh air only help for a short time.

3. Speak up

Tell your boss or scheduler. You must not drive while impaired by fatigue - even if you are within

your work and rest hours.

Download the poster

The full A2 poster is attached to this post as a PDF. Print it on A3 or A2 for your yard, lunchroom or depot.

General information, not legal or medical advice.

Sources

Dawson D & Reid K (1997) - Fatigue, alcohol and performance impairment, Nature 388:235 - https://www.nature.com/articles/40775

Williamson AM & Feyer A-M (2000) - Moderate sleep deprivation produces impairments equivalent to alcohol intoxication, Occupational and Environmental Medicine 57:649-655 - https://oem.bmj.com/content/57/10/649

Queensland Government - Alcohol limits - https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/safety/road-safety/drink-driving/blood-alcohol