

Scouts Victoria

Drowsy Driving Guidelines

Key messages

- Drowsy Driving is primarily caused by insufficient sleep and is a significant contributor (approx. 20%) to road crashes and fatalities.
- Traditional in-vehicle countermeasures to combat fatigue are usually ineffective or only provide temporary benefit - there is no substitute for getting sufficient sleep.
- It is important to plan any journey to ensure nominated drivers have the best opportunity to get sufficient sleep and avoid driving while fatigued.

Background

Adults in Scouting (eg Leaders, Rovers, Parents, Employees) regularly drive long distances (greater than a 2 hour drive) to or from Scouting activities. Leaders drive to weekend camps, supervise the youth during the camp and then drive home. Parents often drive to drop off youth members and then return straight home.

Fatigue contributes to driving risk due to reduced alertness and vigilance; slowed/delayed reaction time; shortened attention span and memory capacity; impaired reasoning and decision-making; etc. It is estimated that 20% of road accidents have fatigue as a cause and being awake for 17 hours has the equivalent impairment on driving of 0.05 Blood Alcohol Content (the legal limit in Victoria).

A number of factors can contribute to fatigue, including: a busy week at work, sleeping badly the night before (eg last night at camp), driving at the end of day (especially when you would normally be resting or sleeping), driving after heavy carbohydrate meals. Factors like stress, alcohol, medication and personal medical conditions such as sleep apnoea can exacerbate the effects of fatigue.

Fatigue Management Strategies

Management strategies that prevent fatigue are preferred over temporary countermeasures used as a response to fatigue when it occurs.

Typical fatigue management strategies include:

- Pack earlier in the week at a section night to give yourself more time on travel day
- Plan the journey to avoid the driver's normal rest or sleep time
- Plan to share the driving
- Consider driving first thing in the morning rather than late at night
- Avoid driving immediately after meals, particularly heavy carbohydrate meals
- Avoid excessive alcohol the night before if driving in the morning
- Excuse nominated drivers from late night tasks on the night before driving home

Warning Signs and Countermeasures

Typical warning signs for fatigue include: yawning, head snaps (head nodding), microsleeps, slow eye movement, regularly shifting seating positions, unnecessary changes in speed, missing turnoffs / directions, etc.

If you or your passengers notice the warning signs while driving, taking a 10 – 15 minute break is the most effective temporary measure.

This could involve walking around to stretch your legs, having a cup of coffee or a 15 minute power nap. (A cup of coffee prior to a powernap may provide additional benefits). These countermeasures may provide

temporary relief for up to 1-2 hours, but the effects of fatigue will develop again until you have had sufficient sleep.

Note: other measures, such as turning up the music, opening windows, opening vents or turning up the air-conditioning are generally not effective.

Driving to or from a Scouting activity

If you are the Leader in Charge of an activity, or driving as an individual, you should:

- Consider drowsy driving as part of the planning of the activity
- During any journey that lasts more than 2 hours, plan to take breaks every 1-2 hours and plan locations in advance where breaks can be taken
- Register the activity in Scouts Victoria **scOut and About** if the activity is at a non-Scouting location outside of the Group's District
- Try to reduce the effects of fatigue prior to driving by implementing some of the fatigue management strategies
- Before setting off, confirm that the nominated drivers are not too fatigued to drive
- During the drive, monitor yourself for warning signs and implement countermeasures as appropriate
- Empower youth members to remind drivers of the key messages of drowsy driving

Major Events

*The Leader in Charge of a **major event** should:*

- Consider drowsy driving as part of the planning of the major event, including scheduled departure and arrival times
- If possible, plan the activities to reduce the effects of fatigue on drivers
- Contact Driver Reviver providers on main routes from the event to determine if they will be open for the return drive after the event
- Communicate the key messages of drowsy driving to participants prior to the start of the event, and on the penultimate day of the event.
- Empower youth members to remind drivers of the key messages of drowsy driving

For more information or suggestions please contact:

State Commissioner – Risk and Safety sc.risk@scoutsvictoria.com.au

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References in this document are from VicRoads Fatigue Fact Sheet 2019

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