



HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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NEWS

STAY AWAKE TO STAY SAFE DURING THANKSGIVING TRAVEL

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO – As families travel for Thanksgiving festivities this week, Hamilton County Safe Communities and Hamilton County Public Health remind drivers about the dangers of drowsy driving.

“Drowsy driving involves about one in six deadly crashes*,” said Jennifer Bierer, Hamilton County Safe Communities Coordinator. “Drowsy driving is a serious contributor to motor vehicle crashes. Just as you should avoid driving while drunk, you shouldn’t drive while drowsy.”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy driving results in 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and more than 100,000 accidents each year.

“It’s time to stop driving and find a safe place to pull over if you have difficulty focusing, feel restless, drift from your lane or hit rumble strips,” Bierer said. “It is even possible to fall into a 3-4 second microsleep without realizing it.”

Sleepiness can impair drivers by causing slower reaction times, vision impairment, lapses in judgment and delays in processing information. In fact, studies show that being awake for more than 20 hours results in an impairment equal to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08%, the legal limit in all states.

These precautions can help keep families safe while traveling this holiday:

- Get a good night’s sleep before you hit the road. You’ll want to be alert for the drive, so be sure to get adequate sleep (seven to nine hours) the night before you go.
- Don’t be too rushed to arrive at your destination. Many drivers try to maximize the holiday weekend by driving at night or without stopping for breaks.
- Use the buddy system. Just as you should not swim alone, avoid driving alone for long distances. A buddy who remains awake for the journey can take a turn behind the wheel and help identify the warning signs of fatigue.
- Take a break every 100 miles or 2 hours. Do something to refresh yourself like getting a snack, switching drivers, or going for a walk.

NEWS

- Take a nap – find a safe place to take a 15 to 20-minute nap, if you think you might fall asleep. Be cautious about excessive drowsiness after waking up.
- Avoid alcohol and medications that cause drowsiness as a side-effect.
- Avoid driving at times when you would normally be asleep.
- Consume caffeine. The equivalent of two cups of coffee can increase alertness for several hours.

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Hamilton County Safe Communities is a traffic safety program coordinated by Hamilton County Public Health with a Coalition made up of individuals from area agencies, including law enforcement, fire/EMS, hospitals, healthcare, government, non-profit, businesses and community members/leaders. Their goal is to reduce and ultimately prevent motor vehicle crashes, injuries and deaths through education and awareness. Funding provided by: USDOT/NHTSA, ODPS, and GHSO.

* According to a recent AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study