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AS DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS, DANGER ON ROADS INCREASES

**Watch for warning signs of drowsiness while driving;
The National Road Safety Foundation offers tips to stay awake at the wheel**

NEW YORK, Nov. 1, 2019 -- As we move our clocks back an hour this weekend, our streets and highways become more dangerous. The National Road Safety Foundation warns that the end of daylight savings time means there's an increased risk of drowsy driving as we do more driving in darkness.

"Fatigue is a factor in more than 328,000 crashes every year," says Michelle Anderson of the National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit group that produces free driver safety programs used in schools nationwide. "Fatigue-related crashes result in at least 6,400 deaths, 109,000 injuries and \$109 billion in monetary losses each year."

Studies show more than 60 percent of U.S. motorists have driven while fatigued, and nearly 37 percent admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel. At highway speeds, a driver who dozes for only four or five seconds can travel more than the length of a football field, crossing into oncoming traffic or off the road and into a tree.

Many experts consider drowsy driving as dangerous as drunk driving, in terms of the risk of serious injury or death to the driver and passengers. Drowsy driving crashes often involve a single vehicle that leaves the roadway, and the dozing driver doesn't attempt corrective action to avoid crashing into another car or a tree or other obstruction alongside the roadway. These crashes often result in serious injuries or death, experts say.

Drowsy driving is especially prevalent among teens and college students, who tend to keep late hours and think they can function on minimal sleep. Ironically, experts say, teens require more sleep than adults.

Safety experts remind drivers to never drink alcohol before driving and to check any medications you take to see if they might induce drowsiness.

"Fatigue can force you into 'micro-sleeps' lasting several seconds, which can have devastating results," says Anderson. "We've seen too many examples of people trying to make it those last few miles, only to crash a block from home. Don't try to tough it out."

The National Road Safety Foundation urges drivers to be alert to these signs of drowsiness while driving:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, rubbing eyes
- Daydreaming or not remembering the last few miles driven
- Head snaps, nodding and yawning
- Drifting out of your lane, tailgating or hitting rumble strips

If you experience any of these warning signs, pull over safely and take a break. Have a cup of coffee or a caffeinated snack or take a 20-minute nap. Allow 30 minutes for caffeine to enter your bloodstream. Some common "remedies" like blasting the radio or opening the car windows are not effective at preventing drowsiness while driving.

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NRSF has free programs on drowsy driving, including "Almost Home," a compelling 18-minute video, a drowsiness self-assessment quiz and a personal sleep log. They can be downloaded from www.nrsf.org/programs/drowsy-driving.

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization founded more than 55 years ago, produces free videos and teaching materials on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, pedestrian safety and a host of other safety issues. It distributes the programs to schools, police and traffic safety advocates, community groups and individuals. It also sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities, partnering nationally with youth advocacy groups including SADD and FCCLA and regionally with auto shows in Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta and Washington D.C.

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