



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

**Deval L. Patrick**  
Governor

**Timothy P. Murray**  
Lieutenant Governor

Office of Grants & Research  
Ten Park Plaza, Suite 3720  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116  
Tel: 617-725-3301  
Fax: 617-725-0260  
617-725-0267  
[www.mass.gov/eopss](http://www.mass.gov/eopss)

**Kevin M. Burke**  
Secretary

**Sandra M. McCroom**  
Executive Director

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**CONTACT:**

Sheila Burgess  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security  
(617) 725-3307

**Massachusetts Warns Residents About  
Dangers of Drowsy Driving**

*Commonwealth teams up with National Sleep Foundation to promote and educate public during "Drowsy Driving Prevention Week"*

**November 2, 2009** – In an effort to keep Massachusetts' roadways safer, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) are spreading the word about the National Sleep Foundation's "Drowsy Driving Prevention Week." The far-reaching public awareness campaign, designed to educate drivers about the dangers of driving while drowsy, runs from November 2 to November 8, 2009. As we prepare to "fall back," reverting to standard daylight savings time on November 1, drivers need to be even more alert as the change in sleeping patterns and roadway visibility could further impair driving skills.

The advice is basic: drive alert, arrive alive. Yet, according to the National Sleep Foundation's 2005 Sleep in America poll, 60 percent of adult drivers - about 168 million people - say they have driven a vehicle while feeling drowsy in the past year, and more than one-third (103 million people) have actually fallen asleep at the wheel.

"At the Highway Division, our number one priority is safety," said Luisa Paiewonsky, Administrator of the Highway Division of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. "Drowsy drivers are less alert, and more prone to accidents. It's critical that we continue to educate drivers about the very real dangers of drowsy driving."

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says there are an estimated 100,000 police-reported crashes as the direct result of driver fatigue each year, resulting in more than 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses.

"Most of our residents are aware of the hazards of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, but many are unaware of the dangerous effects of sleepiness behind the wheel. Like alcohol and drugs, sleep loss or fatigue impairs driving skills," said Sheila Burgess, Director of Highway Safety for the EOPSS. "We all need to be aware that lack of sleep can have serious consequences on our lives and on the roadways."

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Sleep-related crashes are most common among teens, with more than 50 percent admitting to driving while sleepy or fatigued in the past year, as well as males under 26, shift workers and people with long work hours, commercial drivers, people with undiagnosed or untreated sleep disorders, and business travelers.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends drivers get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night to maintain proper alertness during the day and urges drivers to pull off the road if they show signs of drowsiness or fatigue while driving. Before driving, every driver should consider whether they are:

- Sleep-deprived or fatigued (6 hours of sleep or less triples risk)
- Suffering from sleep loss (insomnia), poor quality sleep, or a sleep debt
- Driving long distances without proper rest breaks
- Driving through the night, mid-afternoon or when you would normally be asleep
- Taking sedating medications (antidepressants, cold tablets, antihistamines)
- Working more than 60 hours a week (increases your risk by 40%)
- Working more than one job and your main job involves shift work
- Drinking even small amounts of alcohol
- Driving alone or on a long, rural, or dark road

For more information please visit [www.mass.gov/highwaysafety](http://www.mass.gov/highwaysafety) or [www.drowsydriving.org](http://www.drowsydriving.org).

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