**Febuarary Safety Focus.**

**February safety focus. Fatigued Driving.**

With the time constraints on drivers due to the hours of service Fatigue is a major concern. While the current HOS rules were designed to help combat fatigue. In some ways they just add to the problem. Without being able to stop and get much needed rest drivers are now pushed to continue on to make appointments. This is why we need to be ahead of the Fatigue game Know its causes and ways to prevent it. Each year in the U.S. drowsy driving causes an average of:

 328,000 crashes

 109,000 crashes that result in injuries

 6,400 fatal crashes

Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, November 2014

**Signs of Fatigue.**

There are many warning signs for fatigue. Here is a list of signs to watch for.

 You keep yawning or are unable to keep your eyes open.

 You catch yourself “nodding off” and have trouble keeping your head up.

 You can’t remember driving the last few miles.>

 You end up too close to cars in front of you.

 You miss road signs or drive past your turn.

 You drift into the other lane of traffic.

 You drift onto the “rumble strip” or onto the shoulder of the road.

 You Miss your shift or your having a hard time getting it in gear.

 You cut your corners too close.

**Causes**

Fatigue can be brought on by many different things. Lack of sleep, Overwork, Drugs , Sickness, and unhealthy eating habits. All of these fit the truckers profile putting you in a high risk category for a crash. Let’s examine these in greater detail.

**1.Lack of sleep.**

This is a major cause of fatigue/drowsy driving. Shorting yourself on sleep or getting shorted on sleep starts you on the path to a sleep deficit. A sleep deficit will continue until you get enough good sleep to cancel it out until then it will continue to build.

**2.Overwork.**

Working long hours without breaks can cause fatigue to set in. Due to the extreme amount of concentration that is needed to drive our brains need a break. Stop and walk around get some fresh air relax and let the brain take a break.

**3.Drugs.**

Over the counter drugs can add to fatigue and drowsy driving and in general impair your ability to drive. Before you take any over the counter medication make sure you know how it will affect you. Over the counter medications all have warning on the label do not ignore them. If your doctor prescribes you medication make sure they know you drive for a living.

**4.Sickness**

When we are sick our body’s are using a lot of energy trying to combat our illness causing fatigue. Then to make matters worse we use drugs to help combat the symptoms of our illness. Combine the two and you now have a recipe for disaster.

**5.Eating habits.**

Food can raise or diminish your body"s energy levels. If you are eating healthy and are still tired, try changing the frequency of your meals. Some people find they get more of a boost with several small meals throughout the day, while others prefer the concept of three square meals daily. If you still find yourself sluggish with a well-balanced diet, then a visit to the doctor may be in order.

**Summation**

The national Sleep Foundation reports that being awake for 18 hours is equal to a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08%, which is legally drunk and leaves you at equal risk for a crash. There are many factors that contribute to Fatigue and drowsy driving. It is a battle that the commercial driver fights every day. Remember that caffeine is only a short term fix to your tiredness it is not a solution. Here are some good ways to fight fatigue/drowsy driving.

 Get plenty of sleep. 6 to 8 hours is recommended

 Take frequent breaks. Stop every couple of hours walk around and get the blood flowing .

 Don’t use medications until you are sure that the will not adversely affect you.

 Take a 15-20 min nap. Many times a short nap will help get you through.

If you find yourself getting tired and drowsy take the time and just stop and get some rest.

**Remember that there is nothing that we do, that is worth getting hut or hurting others.**