Fatigue Warning Signs Card

Recognize the Signs. Take Action. Stay Alive.

WINTER DRIVING SAFETY SERIES

FIRST UNDERWRITERS
Insurance Brokers | Est. 1992
firstunderwriters.com | (425) 242-5357

Driver fatigue is one of the deadliest hazards on the road. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) estimates that **13% of commercial vehicle crashes involve a fatigued driver**. Fatigue slows reaction time, impairs judgment, and can cause microsleeps lasting 4 to 5 seconds — enough to travel the length of a football field at highway speed. Use this card to recognize the warning signs before it is too late.

13%	4-5 sec	100K+
OF CMV CRASHES INVOLVE FATIGUE	AVERAGE MICROSLEEP	

1 PHYSICAL WARNING SIGNS

Frequent Yawning	Repeated yawning or inability to keep your mouth closed indicates your body is starved for rest.
Heavy Eyelids	Eyes feel heavy, vision blurs, or you find yourself squinting to focus on the road ahead.
Head Bobbing	Head drops forward involuntarily then jerks back up. This indicates you are on the edge of falling asleep.
Drifting / Lane Departure	Vehicle drifts over lane lines or onto rumble strips. You catch yourself swerving back to center.
Restless / Fidgeting	Constant shifting in your seat, unable to find a comfortable position, legs feel restless or stiff.
Stiff Neck & Shoulders	Muscle tension and soreness build from long hours holding the same posture behind the wheel.
Slow Reaction Time	Delayed response to brake lights, traffic signals, or road hazards. Braking feels late or jerky.
Excessive Blinking	Blinking more than normal, or rubbing your eyes frequently to clear blurriness.

CRITICAL RED FLAG: If you experience head bobbing, lane departure, or cannot recall the last few miles of road, you are in immediate danger. Pull over at the first safe location.

2 MENTAL & COGNITIVE WARNING SIGNS

Difficulty Concentrating	Mind wanders repeatedly. You have to re-read signs or re-check mirrors multiple times.
Daydreaming	Thoughts drift away from driving. You catch yourself thinking about unrelated topics for long stretches.
Missing Exits / Turns	Driving past your intended exit, rest stop, or turn-off without noticing until it is too late.
Forgetting Recent Miles	Cannot remember the last several miles of driving, or the scenery between two points on your route.
Irritability / Impatience	Increased frustration with traffic, road conditions, or other drivers. Short temper and agitation.
Poor Decision-Making	Taking risks you normally would not: following too closely, unsafe lane changes, running yellow lights.
Disconnected Feeling	A sensation of being on autopilot or detached from the driving task. Feeling zoned out.

DID YOU KNOW? Driving after 18 hours without sleep impairs your performance equivalent to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% — the legal limit for alcohol impairment. After 24 hours without sleep, impairment doubles to the equivalent of 0.10% BAC.

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3 FATIGUE SEVERITY LEVELS

Level	Signs	Action Required
EARLY	Yawning, restless shifting, mild eye strain, slight difficulty focusing	**Open windows, adjust temperature, engage co-driver in conversation. Plan for a break within 30 min.**
MODERATE	Heavy eyelids, repeated yawning, difficulty concentrating, irritability, missing turns	**Pull over at the next safe stop within 15 minutes. Walk, stretch, and consume caffeine. Consider a 20-min nap.**
SEVERE	Head bobbing, microsleeps, lane departure, forgotten miles, feeling disconnected	**STOP DRIVING IMMEDIATELY. Pull over safely. Do not continue. Take a full rest break of at least 30 minutes. Notify dispatch.**

4 IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS — WHEN FATIGUE HITS

1. **Acknowledge It** — Admit to yourself that you are fatigued. Denial is the most dangerous response. Do not try to push through.
2. **Signal & Pull Over** — Activate your hazard lights and move to the nearest safe location: rest area, truck stop, or wide shoulder.
3. **Secure Your Vehicle** — Set the parking brake, place wheel chocks if available, and activate all required warning devices.
4. **Contact Dispatch** — Notify your dispatcher or fleet manager. Fatigue is a safety emergency, not a scheduling inconvenience.
5. **Take a Power Nap** — Set an alarm for 20 to 30 minutes. Even a short nap can significantly restore alertness and reaction time.
6. **Walk & Stretch** — After napping, get out and walk around for at least 5 minutes. Stretch your legs, arms, neck, and back.
7. **Hydrate & Refuel** — Drink water and have a light snack. Caffeine can help but takes 15-20 minutes to take effect. Avoid heavy meals.
8. **Reassess Before Driving** — After your break, honestly evaluate: Am I alert enough to drive safely? If any doubt remains, rest longer.

> **THE 20-MINUTE POWER NAP:** Set an alarm for 20 min. If you can consume caffeine right before the nap, it will kick in just as you wake up for maximum alertness. This is called a **"caffeine nap"** and is backed by sleep science research.

5 FATIGUE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Before Your Trip

- **Get 7-8 hours of sleep** — Plan sleep like you plan your route. Protect your rest time from interruptions.
- **Avoid heavy meals** — Eat lighter meals before driving. Heavy food causes drowsiness and reduces alertness.
- **Limit alcohol & medications** — No alcohol within 8 hours of driving. Check all medications for drowsiness warnings.
- **Plan your rest stops** — Map rest areas every 2-3 hours on your route before you depart.

During Your Trip

- **Take breaks every 2-3 hours** — Stop, walk, and stretch at regular intervals even when you feel alert.
- **Stay hydrated** — Drink water throughout the drive. Dehydration amplifies fatigue and reduces focus.
- **Keep the cab cool** — Warm temperatures accelerate drowsiness. Maintain cooler cab air. Crack a window.
- **Engage your mind** — Vary your speed within legal limits, adjust mirrors, scan actively, listen to talk radio or podcasts.

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6 HOURS OF SERVICE (HOS) KEY LIMITS

Rule	Limit	What It Means
11-Hour Driving Limit	11 hours	Max driving time after 10 consecutive hours off duty
14-Hour Window	14 hours	Max on-duty window after coming on duty following 10 hours off
30-Minute Break	After 8 hours	Required 30-min break before driving after 8 cumulative hours of driving
60/70-Hour Limit	60/70 hours	Max on-duty hours in 7/8 consecutive days. 34-hour restart resets the clock.
Sleeper Berth	7/3 or 8/2 split	Split sleeper berth allows two rest periods totaling 10 hours (7+3 or 8+2)

REMEMBER: HOS rules are the legal minimum. Your body may need rest well before you reach your HOS limits. Always listen to your body first. Being legal does not mean you are safe to drive.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS & DRIVER ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Fleet Manager / Dispatch: _____

Safety Director: _____

Roadside Assistance: _____

Insurance Broker (First Underwriters): **(425) 242-5357**

I have read and understand the fatigue warning signs, severity levels, immediate action steps, and prevention strategies described in this card. I commit to monitoring myself for signs of fatigue and will stop driving whenever I believe I am too fatigued to operate safely.

Driver Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Unit #: _____

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