

HEALTHY, WEALTHY AND WISE

FATIGUE AND THE TAXI DRIVER

STAY AWAKE, STAY ALIVE

“A TAXI DRIVER WHO REMAINS FRESH AND SUFFICIENTLY RESTED WILL TAKE THE SAME IF NOT MORE MONEY IN LESS TIME.”

With so much time at the wheel, lots of late night work and time spent waiting for the next customer, taxi drivers are prime targets for fatigue and its devastating effects.

Fatigue is one of the big killers on the road in NSW, so it is important to learn to manage the challenges of taxi driving so that you stay safe and ready to work another shift.

In this edition of Healthy, Wealthy and Wise we examine some simple pitfalls and tips to survive on the road.

SLEEP DEBT

Most people require between 8 and 10 hours of sleep per night – this varies if you work at night and sleep in the day.

Sleep Debt is the difference between how many hours sleep a person needs each night and how much sleep that person actually gets.

The larger the sleep debt, the more the chance of experiencing fatigue increases.

Sleep debt will not go away by itself. Sleeping is the only way to reduce sleep debt and it is a well proven fact that you need to sleep more than 1 hour for every hour of lost sleep.

MICROSLEEPS

Microsleeps are brief unintended episodes of loss of attention.

Microsleeps are associated with events such as a blank stare, head snapping, prolonged eye closure.

Microsleeps occur when a fatigued person is trying to stay awake.

The risk of a microsleep increases with increased sleep debt.

Microsleeps last from a few seconds to several minutes. It is often not enough to notice, but remember a taxi travelling at 50 kph travels almost 70 metres in 5 seconds.

Often a person is not aware a microsleep has occurred, however, it can also have tragic consequences.

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

DO NOT OVER COMMIT

The Contract Determination sets a shift at a maximum of twelve hours. This is not binding on the taxi driver but it does provide a guide.

A driver who has access to a taxi 24 hours per day, (e.g. operator/driver) must accept it is not possible to drive the taxi 24 hours per day.

A driver must select and commit to a limited number of hours and include regular breaks.

SET REALISTIC GOALS

Taxi driving is a business and all taxi drivers should have a business plan. This may not include a written plan but it should at least allow a taxi driver to set realistic earning goals.

Average expected income should be a genuine average and not based on peak period takings.

PACE YOURSELF

No business takes top money every hour the door is open.

Once realistic goals have been set, a driver should be able to plan and take breaks to get plenty of rest.

THINK LIKE A PROFESSIONAL

Professional taxi drivers take every opportunity to maximise takings during the shift. Professional taxi drivers do not waste time waiting for the 'perfect' job, they take every fare as it comes along.

ONLY DRIVE THE BEST CARS

Although all taxis must be roadworthy and comply with the Passenger Transport Act, there are some taxi vehicles that are better than others.

A driver who drives only the best taxi vehicle will take more money in less time. A taxi vehicle of lesser quality is more tiring to drive and reduces the taxi driver's earning capacity.

CONTROL ANGER

Anger is not only a stupid emotion it also drains a person emotionally. An angry person will tire much more quickly.

TAKE REGULAR EXERCISE

Exercise gives you energy. Energy gives you the opportunity to perform at your best. Energy helps fight fatigue.

OTHER EFFECTS

REDUCED EARNINGS

As a person begins to suffer fatigue their performance reduces.

This means you will not be able to continue to earn the highest hourly rate.

A taxi driver who remains fresh and sufficiently rested will take the same if not more money in less time.

INCREASED RISK OF ASSAULT AND ABUSE

Fatigue has a negative effect on a person's ability to remain patient and be tolerant of an abusive customer.

Fatigue also reduces the driver's ability to assess a potential threat. A driver suffering from fatigue is therefore more likely to be a victim of verbal or physical abuse. A tired driver is also more likely to demonstrate road rage.

INCREASED RISK OF INJURY

Fatigue increases the risk of all manual handling injuries.

INCREASED RISK OF LOSS OF LICENCE

The risk of an at-fault collision is greater for a fatigued driver.

A fatigued driver is also more likely to drive faster than the speed limit, forget about speed cameras or drive through a red light. Tired drivers can very quickly lose their 12 licence points, especially during periods where double demerit points apply.

REDUCED OVERALL HEALTH

Tiredness reduces a person's will to exercise.

Lack of exercise can easily lead to obesity and life threatening illnesses like diabetes, stroke and heart attack.

PREPARE TO STOP IF YOU...

- ▶ Are getting bored.
- ▶ Are getting restless.
- ▶ Your eyelids get heavy.
- ▶ You become impatient.
- ▶ You have been driving non-stop for 2 hours.
- ▶ Your arms or legs are getting stiff.

