



## News you can use...from your EAP

### **Drowsy Drivers Causing Major Public Safety Problem**

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), lack of sleep is creating a major public safety problem in the U.S. – drowsy driving. The NSF's 2009 *Sleep in America* poll finds that more than one-half of adults (54%) – potentially 110 million licensed drivers – have driven when drowsy at least once in the past year. Nearly one-third of drivers polled (28%) say they have nodded off or fallen asleep while driving a vehicle. The result: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conservatively estimates that there are 100,000 car accidents each year caused by driver drowsiness, and these crashes result in 71,000 injuries and 1,500 deaths.

A study of drivers in North Carolina found that among those who got into auto accidents, half had slept less than six hours before the crash. Researchers at Stanford University recently concluded that sleep-deprived drivers are just as dangerous as drunk drivers. When sleep deprived, the brain is essentially too tired to process the information it is receiving effectively, resulting in slower information processing and reaction time at the wheel. A 2008 German study found that sleep-deprived subjects had reaction times and general performance abilities comparable to subjects with blood alcohol levels equivalent of 0.05.

### **Make adequate sleep a priority**

The most up-to-date research reveals that most adults require between 7-9 hours of sleep per night to function at their best. Yet, according to the 2009 *Sleep in America* poll, one in five Americans gets less than six hours of sleep per night. To avoid drowsy driving and to function at your best, the NSF recommends the following tips to get a better night's sleep:

1. Make regular, adequate sleep a priority.
2. Try to have a standard relaxing bedtime routine and keep regular sleep times.
3. Exercise regularly, but finish your workout at least three hours before bedtime.
4. Avoid foods and drinks high in caffeine (coffee, colas and tea) for at least eight hours prior to bedtime and avoid alcohol for a few hours before bedtime. Caffeine and alcohol disturb sleep.
5. Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex; if you do this, you will strengthen the association between bed and sleep. It is best to remove work materials, computers and television sets from the sleep environment.

### **Your EAP is here to help**

If sleep is a problem for you or one of your dependents, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. A professional EAP counselor can help you assess your situation, help you devise a plan of action, and/or refer you to the most appropriate treatment provider.

To obtain no cost counseling or other EAP services, please call **800-869-0276** or securely request services from the Member Access section of the EAP website: [www.eapconsultants.com](http://www.eapconsultants.com)