

Drowsy drivers can face criminal as well as civil charges

Written by Australian Business

October 03, 2013 /24-7PressRelease/ -- **Drowsy drivers can face criminal as well as civil charges**

Automobile accidents can happen for a variety of common reasons. Drunk driving, texting while driving and other types of distracted driving are at the top of the list nationwide for serious accidents. Another very common cause for accidents, but one that doesn't receive as much attention as others, is drowsy driving. Fatigued drivers have been causing accidents for decades, but lawmakers are only starting to wake up to the legal ramifications. Across the country, authorities are stepping up their driver awareness programs for drowsy driving, and some states are imposing stiffer penalties for people who cause accidents by falling asleep at the wheel.

According to DrowsyDriving.org, 60 percent of U.S. drivers said they drove while sleepy at least once during the past year, and over a third of them admitted to actually falling asleep while driving. This creates a hazard not only for themselves and their passengers, but for everyone sharing the road with them.

Drowsy driving is as dangerous as driving drunk

Teen Driver Source says people who have been awake at least 18 hours are just as impaired as someone with a blood alcohol content of .08 percent, Washington's legal limit. Sleepy drivers increase their chances of getting into an [accident](#) by driving along boring roads, driving when they should be sleeping or driving long distances alone, says Burnaby Now.

And just like drunk driving, in some cases people who cause accidents while driving sleepy can face criminal charges, as in the Bronx case of a bus driver who reportedly fell asleep while driving a bus full of passengers. The man, who averaged only three hours of sleep a night, caused the gruesome deaths of 15 passengers, as well as numerous injuries, according to the New York Times.

Some people say it's hard to draw the line between being just a little sleepy and too tired to drive safely, but it's a line that drivers should learn to identify. Several states have filed criminal charges against drowsy drivers who have caused accidents, and officials are able to piece together evidence of sleepy driving by sophisticated reconstruction methods.

Take precautions to prevent causing an accident

AAA lists several ways a person can avoid causing an accident:-Get enough rest the night before starting a trip.-Drive with a passenger who is awake and alert.-Take frequent breaks to get out of the car and walk around.-Drive during times you'd normally be awake.

Any of these methods can be more effective than merely grabbing a cup of coffee or an energy drink, although those too can help if all a driver needs is a small pick-me-up.

Contacting an attorney

It's not always possible to prevent an accident, especially when other vehicles are involved. Being the most alert driver on the road doesn't keep other drivers awake. If you or a loved one has been hurt in an accident caused by a sleepy driver, contact an experienced personal injury attorney right away. Victims of accidents have rights, which can include being compensated for their medical or [funeral](#) expenses.

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