Fatigue is the decreased capacity to function normally because of excessive stimulation or exertion, and usually manifests itself as drowsiness or general weariness. It can be caused by a lack of sleep; physical overexertion; overeating; driving down long, monotonous stretches of road; or physiological overload caused by prolonged stress. Fatigue compromises your ability to concentrate, slows your reaction time, and may affect your ability to control the vehicle.

**To avoid fatigue before starting out:**
- Get enough sleep on regular basis.
- Monitor your physical condition before entering your vehicle. If you feel extremely tired, do not drive.
- Avoid driving late at night. Most drivers are less alert at night, especially after midnight.
- Do not take any drugs that can make you drowsy.
- Don’t overeat, and attempt to space meals so that digestion doesn’t require so much from your body that interferes with the task of driving.
- Exercise can help you to build up endurance, but do not exercise vigorously just prior to driving long distance.

**To deal with fatigue that occurs during driving:**
- Split long drives into shorter segments, stopping and resting between segments whether you feel tried or not.
- Move around during rest breaks to get your blood flowing.
- Force yourself to attend to the driving task by checking mirrors, looking ahead, and keeping your eyes moving. This will help you to maintain alertness.
- Try chewing gum or singing along to the radio.
- Roll down your window to get some fresh air.
- In extreme cases, pull over at a rest stop and take a nap.

There are many underlying causes of sleepiness, fatigue and drowsy driving. Including sleep loss from restriction or too little sleep, interruption or fragmented sleep; chronic sleep debt; circadian factors associated with driving patterns or work schedules; undiagnosed or untreated sleep disorders; time spent on a task; the use of sedating medications; and the consumption of alcohol when already tired. These factors have cumulative effects and a combination of any of these can greatly increase one’s risk for a fatigue-related crash.

**Sleepiness or Fatigue Causes the Following:**
- Impaired reaction time, judgment and vision
- Problems with information processing and short-term memory
- Decreased performance, vigilance and motivation
- Increased moodiness and aggressive behavior

For more information feel free to call CWFL at (213) 821-0800 or visit www.usc.edu/worklife