

Sleep Apnea

Affects up to 28% of Commercial

Truck Drivers

- Why Should You Be Concerned?



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INTRODUCTION

Sleep apnea is a chronic sleep disorder that causes people to stop breathing while they sleep. If left untreated, it can increase the risk of serious health issues including high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, obesity, diabetes, heart failure and excessive daytime sleepiness.

More than 18 million Americans are affected by sleep apnea – making it just as common as type 2 diabetes.¹ However, there are many more people who suffer from this condition and don't even know it, meaning they're missing out on important treatments and leaving themselves vulnerable to the health issues listed above.

In the commercial trucking industry alone, up to 28% of drivers have mild to severe obstructive sleep apnea.² This condition is especially dangerous for these individuals who spend much of their lives on the road, as sleep apnea can affect their daytime alertness and make it difficult for them to stay awake, focus their eyes and react quickly.

Fortunately, there are effective ways to treat sleep apnea so that commercial truck drivers can be safer and more alert when they're on the job.

“In the commercial trucking industry alone, up to 28% of drivers have mild to severe obstructive sleep apnea.”

LACK OF SLEEP:

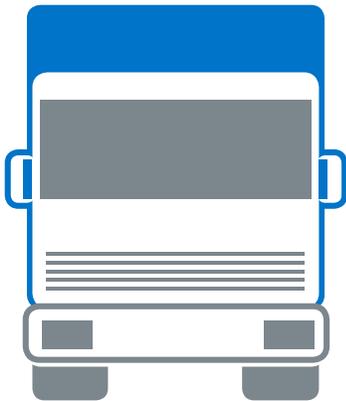
Lack of sleep is affecting commercial truck drivers

Approximately 170,000 Americans are injured in trucking accidents each year. Although not all of those accidents are linked to sleep apnea specifically, driver fatigue accounts for up to 40%.³

In 2012, the National Sleep Foundation conducted a poll among transportation professionals to gain insight into their sleep habits and found that a large number of those surveyed struggle to get enough sleep.⁴

Among commercial truck drivers:

44% *rarely or never get a good night's sleep on work nights*



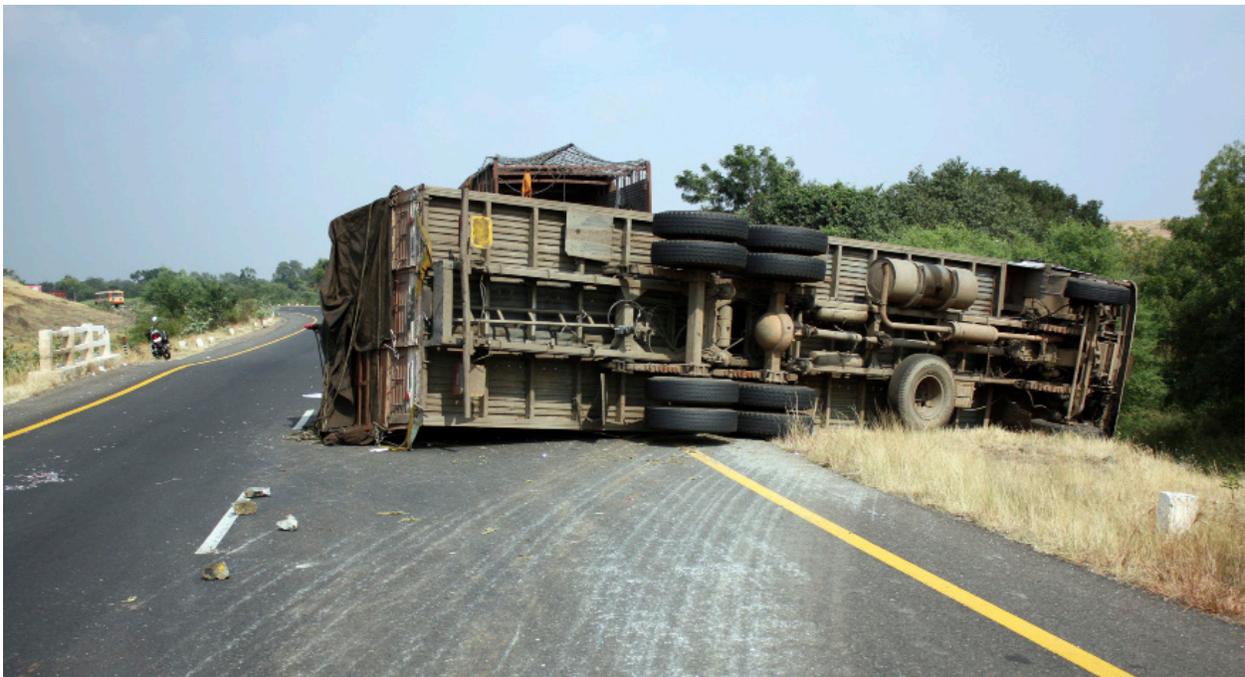
42% *napped during work hours in the past two weeks*

27% *said their work schedule doesn't allow adequate time for sleep*

14% *said sleepiness has caused safety problems on the job*

Although it is unclear how many of those surveyed suffer from sleep apnea or other sleep disorders, this data from the National Sleep Foundation shows that transportation professionals are facing a real issue when it comes to getting the rest they need to function safely on the road.

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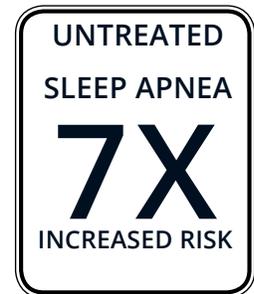
IMPACTS ON DRIVING:

How sleep apnea impacts driving ability

There's a common misconception that sleep apnea only affects people when they're sleeping, but the fact is that it can also impact daytime functions.

If untreated, sleep apnea makes it difficult to stay awake, focus the eyes, remain alert and react quickly. And, even though many sleep apnea patients say they have never fallen asleep while driving, it's important to remember that you don't have to actually fall asleep to pose a danger to yourself and other drivers. Simply being less attentive or alert than you should be can put you at risk of getting into an accident.

Because of these reasons, truck drivers with untreated sleep apnea have up to a seven-fold increased risk of being involved in a motor vehicle crash.⁵



CAN YOU STILL DRIVE?

Can commercial truck drivers still drive if they have sleep apnea?



Understandably, commercial truck drivers may worry that receiving a sleep apnea diagnosis will disqualify them from working, but this isn't necessarily the case.

While it's up to the discretion of a Medical Examiner on a case-by-case basis, most commercial truck drivers who have been diagnosed with sleep apnea are permitted to drive as long as they receive treatment.

All commercial truck drivers are required to obtain and maintain a Medical Examiner's Certificate in order to work in the transportation industry.⁶ Those who are deemed unfit to drive as a result of a sleep apnea diagnosis may be prescribed treatment and then reevaluated at a later date. Medical Examiner's Certificates are typically good for two years, though a medical examiner may deem that a commercial truck driver with sleep apnea requires more frequent certification.⁷

The good news is that sleep apnea is a highly treatable disorder, so most commercial truck drivers are able to continue working.

TREATMENT METHODS:

Effective methods of treatment for sleep apnea

There are several effective methods of treatment for sleep apnea that can restore regular breathing during sleep and relieve symptoms such as loud snoring and excessive daytime sleepiness.

First, there are some lifestyle changes that can help people with mild sleep apnea. These include the following:



Avoiding alcohol and certain medications that cause drowsiness and make it difficult for the throat to stay open during sleep



Losing weight



Using nasal sprays or allergy medications to keep nasal passages open at night



Sleeping on your side instead of your back to help keep your throat open

CHALLENGES OF TRAVEL:

The challenges of traveling with a CPAP machine



Carrying CPAP machines and ensuring that they function properly can be challenging for commercial truck drivers who spend much of their time on the road. For example, CPAP users must be diligent about cleaning and sanitizing their equipment, or else they risk being exposed to potentially harmful mold, bacteria and viruses.

In many cases, commercial truck drivers end up hastily cleaning their CPAP machines in dirty public rest area sinks. This is not only inconvenient, but also ineffective.

Fortunately, there are products available that are specifically targeted toward sleep apnea sufferers who are often in transit, making it easy for them to ensure the safety and effectiveness of their CPAP machines.

BENEFITS OF TREATMENT:

Get treated for sleep apnea and be a safer, more alert driver

With effective treatments available to significantly ease the symptoms of sleep apnea, there's no reason for anyone – whether they're in the transportation industry or not – to suffer.

Sleep deprivation and fatigue are clearly issues among commercial truck drivers, posing a danger to these professionals and others on the road. However, thanks to CPAP therapy and other solutions, it's easy to treat this disorder and be a safer and more alert driver.

MORE INFORMATION

Sources

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2. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24144003>
3. <http://www.thecitywire.com/node/30110#.UzhH-a1dVBA>
4. <http://sleepfoundation.org/media-center/press-release/sleepy-pilots-train-operators-and-drivers>
5. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090311111002.htm>
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7. <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/faq/how-long-my-medical-certificate-valid>
8. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/sleepapnea/treatment.html>

Additional Resources:

Drowsy Driving Causes More Than 100,000 Crashes Each Year: Drivers who experience excessive daytime sleepiness, a common symptom of sleep apnea, are 15 times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident.

Do You Have Sleep Apnea? As Many As 80% Of People Remain Undiagnosed: A series of quick and simple online tests can help you determine whether you're at high risk of having sleep apnea.

7 Things That Increase the Sleep Apnea Risk: Risk factors for sleep apnea include obesity, circumference of neck, age, family history and more.

ABOUT US

BetterRest
Solutions

Makers of
SoClean[®]

Better Rest Solutions was founded in July of 2011 in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, with the goal of improving the health and quality of life for those who suffer from obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and other sleep disorders.

We created the SoClean CPAP Cleaner and Sanitizer, an automated device that destroys 99.9% of CPAP mold, bacteria and viruses, to help CPAP users overcome the challenge of keeping their equipment clean.

Then, we made a portable version of this device for CPAP users to take with them when they're away from home. The SoClean 2 Go is the perfect travel companion for any CPAP user - small enough to fit anywhere, but powerful enough to destroy 99.9% of CPAP germs.



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