



Don't drive when tired – stop for a break BEFORE feeling drowsy

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Drivers warned not to wait until they feel tired before taking a break this summer



National Highways tells us...

- More than half of drivers in England (60%) and nearly three-quarters of parents (73%) plan to make longer overnight or early-morning journeys for their summer holidays to avoid traffic.
- Just 37% of drivers in the South West say they start a long journey feeling well rested – the lowest proportion of any region in England.
- Two-thirds of fatigue-related collisions occurred between 7pm and 7am based on the most recent available data

With the summer holidays starting this week and thousands of drivers due to hit the road, new research reveals many will be making longer journeys at unfamiliar times of day – often overnight or early-morning – the same time period statistics show is when the most fatigue-related collisions occur.

As more drivers plan to travel overnight and outside their regular patterns to take advantage of quieter roads, National Highways is urging them to plan breaks before they become tired, recommending a 15-minute break at least every two hours and ensuring they are properly rested before setting off.

New research for National Highways found that more than half of drivers in England (60%) and rising to nearly three-quarters of parents (73%), expect to make longer journeys



between 7pm and 7am this summer, out of their usual routine. Yet almost one in two (45%) admit they aren't always well rested before long journeys, this is despite drivers admitting they aren't used to driving at these times. Similarly, only 42% of drivers plan rest stops in advance.

The findings come as analysis of national collision data from 2024 shows that nearly half (41%) of all fatigue-related fatal and serious injury collisions on motorways and major A-roads took place between May and August, with two-thirds of these occurring between 7pm and 7am throughout the summer months. This is set against national traffic volumes on motorways and major A-roads increasing by almost 6% over the last three years.

Drivers in the South West are broadly in line with the national average when it comes to planning journey outside their normal routines with just over half (53%) say they would make a long journey overnight or in the early hour. Similarly, 42% plan rest breaks beforehand, matching the national average. However, the South West records the lowest proportion of drivers starting a long journey feeling fully rested, at just 37%.

Colin Stevenson, Road Safety information Lead at National Highways, said: "Fatigue can affect your concentration and reactions before you realise it. Our research shows more drivers will be travelling overnight or early-morning this summer, yet many aren't making sure they're properly rested before setting off.

Whether you're heading off on holiday, visiting family or making a long journey, make sure you are well rested and never push through tiredness. Remember to plan at least a 15-minute break for every two hours of driving, whatever time you're on the road."

Leading driver behaviour expert Professor John Groeger warns that motorists are often poor judges of their own tiredness and warns that drivers shouldn't wait until they feel tired to take a break. Just as thirst is a sign that dehydration has already started, feeling tired can be a sign that fatigue is already impairing your concentration, reactions and judgement on the road.



Professor Groeger also warns drivers should consider how long they have been awake, as well as how long they have been driving.

Professor John Groeger, Professor of Psychology at Nottingham Trent University said:

“Driving is a complex task that requires sustained concentration, yet many drivers underestimate how demanding long-distance journeys can be. The danger is that people become less aware of their own declining performance. This happens because we spend too long driving without a break, and drive when we have been awake for too long. Drivers should think about more than just the miles ahead. They need to think about how long they have been driving without a break- two hours should be the max. Drivers also need to think about how long they have been awake, the quality of sleep when they last slept, and the time of day at which they are travelling. All of these can affect your ability behind the wheel.”

The thought of quieter roads appears to encourage some drivers to drive at unfamiliar times and to postpone breaks. Among those who stop less frequently overnight, 40% believe fewer vehicles on the road makes it easier to drive longer distances without stopping.

With millions expected to take to the roads over the holiday season, National Highways' T.R.I.P. campaign encourages drivers to remember four simple steps to prepare for journeys on motorways and major A roads during busy periods:

- **Top-up:** Fuel, oil, and screen wash
- **Rest:** Plan regular stops every two hours to avoid driver fatigue
- **Inspect:** Check tyre pressure and tread
- **Prepare:** Have a plan for severe weather conditions

Notes:

- Analysis is based on 2024 STATS19 data and includes collisions on motorways and major A-roads where fatigue was recorded as a contributory factor. Stats from 2024 are the most recent available.



- The “summer months” are defined as June, July and August.
- Further research conducted by Walnut Omnibus, a nationally representative omnibus survey of 2,000 adults across England between 9 – 11 June 2026. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all England adults (aged 18+).

About National Highways:

National Highways is the wholly government-owned company responsible for modernising, maintaining and operating England’s motorways and major A roads.

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