

FATIGUE

YOUR RISK | Driver fatigue is a sleeping killer. The risk of crashing when driving after being awake for 17 hours is equivalent to having a blood alcohol reading of 0.05.

Fatigue is a contributor to road crashes in the Northern Territory, but its true extent is not known. However, the NT Report concludes that with travel involving long distances in remote country, it is likely fatigue, regardless of average speed, plays a significant part in NT crashes.

The majority of crashes on NT open roads are single vehicle crashes (run-off-road, overturned), which suggests a lethal link between fatigue and speed.

Since 2000, fatigue has been recorded as a cause in 6% of deaths from road crashes and in 4% of serious injuries in the NT. However, because it is difficult to identify the exact cause in some fatal crashes, it is strongly believed the role of fatigue is under-recorded (*NT Report, page 31*).

A study by the Centre for Sleep Research in South Australia found that people who drive after being awake for 17 hours have a risk of crashing equivalent to a blood alcohol reading of 0.05. After being awake for 24 hours, the risk rises to be equivalent to 0.10 blood alcohol level (*NT Report, page 31*).

The ATSB estimates that fatigue may be a factor in up to 30% of fatal crashes and 15% of serious injuries (ATSB 2004). Statistics from the WA Office of Road Safety (*2004 Fatigue Campaign, Fact Sheet*) indicate that around 30% of rural crashes were attributable to fatigue.

In addition to the 89 commercial and public roadside rest areas, the NT currently provides resources and programs to raise awareness of the dangers of fatigue and to encourage drivers to take appropriate rest (*NT Report, page 31*).

What should change

- The current level of fatigue education and awareness campaigns should continue, and should include information on the rest areas available in the NT (*NT Report, page 32*).