

## Returning to Standard Time Can Be Deadly

For most people in the United States, daylight saving time ends at 2 a.m. on the first Sunday of November. And, according to several studies, the days following the return to standard time can be a particularly dangerous period for your employees, both at work and on their way home.

Pedestrians walking around at dusk are nearly three times more likely to be struck and killed by cars in the days following the end of daylight saving time than just before the time change.

It is not the darkness itself that's the problem, but rather the lack of adjustment to earlier nighttime that's the killer. A study of seven years of nationwide traffic fatalities was conducted at Carnegie Mellon University, calculating the risk per mile walked for pedestrians. The study found that the per-mile risk jumps 186 percent from October to November - and then drops 21 percent in December.

The December drop-off indicates the increased risk caused by the trouble both drivers and pedestrians have adjusting when darkness suddenly comes an hour earlier, the researchers said.

The end of daylight saving time can leave many feeling fatigued, which can pose safety risks both at home and in the workplace. Some things to keep in mind when switching back to standard time are:

**Fatigue** -- Studies suggest that it takes people who work traditional hours several days to fully readjust their sleep schedule after the time change. While it may seem a welcome gift to get an extra hour of sleep as opposed to losing an hour in the spring, there is a physiological consequence to changing our clocks. Don't be surprised if you feel a bit sluggish during the first week or so of November.

**Accidents** -- Evidence suggests that time changes increase safety problems both at work and at home. Just being aware of the increased risk of accidents in the period immediately following the time change may help you stay alert. Try to avoid building up a sleep debt in the days before the change.

Safety professionals have long used the start and end of daylight saving time as reminders for performing recurring safety tasks. Use the occasion of setting your clocks forward or back as a cue to:

**Check and replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms.** Replace any smoke alarm unit that is older than 10 years. Replace any CO alarm unit that is older than 5 years.

**Prepare an emergency disaster supply kit (water, food, flashlights, batteries, blankets, etc.).** Once you have created your disaster kit, use the semi-annual time change to check its contents, including testing and replacing flashlight batteries.

**Check to see if your fire extinguishers need recharging.** Check the small gauge at the top of the extinguisher. If the needle in that gauge is in the green, chances are, the extinguisher is okay. If it is in the red, you need to have the extinguisher recharged.

