

Time Change Means Increased Road Risks

According to the experts, when daylight saving time comes to an end and the time changes, this marks the beginning of a period in which the risk of traffic accidents increases.

Since night falls an hour earlier, the commute home from work or school will likely be in the dark. Also, the change of waking time coupled with earlier nightfall throws off our internal clock. It can take as long as two weeks for our bodies to adjust.

The fundamental problem we have in our current 24/7 society is that everyone is already somewhat sleep deprived. When we make even the smallest adjustments in our sleep schedules, this can have a negative impact.

In short, the shift from daylight saving to standard time could put you and your family at greater risk of traffic accidents during your commutes. This is especially so during the first couple of weeks after the shift.

Extra Care Needed

You should be especially careful when driving home after a long, hard day at work. Combining dark roads with end-of-day exhaustion and stress is a recipe for disaster.

But drivers are not the only ones who should be careful. The risk of pedestrian fatalities following the time change increases by over 180%, before dropping again in December. Along with dark roads, difficulty adjusting to the end of daylight saving is a factor in these fatal accidents.

Effects of Fatigue

With the switch from daylight saving to standard time comes sleep deprivation for those who have trouble adjusting, which means more drowsy drivers on the road.

When you drive tired, the risk of having an accident increases. This is because not getting enough sleep negatively affects your:

- **Reflexes**, slowing your reaction time;
- **Judgment**, making it more likely that you will make mistakes and take risks;
- **Concentration**, allowing your mind to wander and increasing the chances of being distracted;
- **Alertness**, increasing the chance that you will miss important traffic cues;
- **Mood**, putting you in a bad mood and leaving you unmotivated;

Research shows that inattention and other mental lapses contribute to as many as 50% of all crashes. While fatigue may not be involved in all these crashes, it clearly contributes to many of them.