

Safety and health alert

09/03 Commercial vehicle driver succumbs to driver fatigue

Incident

A commercial vehicle driver travelling South from Karratha, with a consignment of furniture, received fatal injuries when his sixteen tonne truck left the road, falling into the dry riverbed below the Cane River Bridge, fifty six kilometres North of Nanutarra. It is believed that the driver may have fallen asleep at the wheel.

Factors

- The owner-driver is understood to have been awake for more than forty-three hours.
- The forensic pathologist's report found evidence of alcohol and prescription medicine that contained a stimulant.
- The return journey undertaken by the commercial vehicle driver was carried out in the early hours of the morning, when fatigue is most likely to affect a person.
- There were no flexible scheduling practices implemented by the owner-driver that enabled him sufficient non-working time to obtain sleep throughout the journey.

Recommendations

- Commercial vehicle drivers operating in Western Australia should not exceed the operating standards in the Western Australian Code of Practice [Fatigue Management for Commercial Vehicle Drivers](#).
- Employers and self employed persons who undertake commercial vehicle operations have a duty of care to provide, as far as practicable, a safe system of work for the management of driver fatigue, where the scheduling of commercial vehicle operations pose a risk of driver fatigue to themselves or their drivers.
- Self employed persons and employees are required to take reasonable care to ensure their own safety and health and to not adversely affect the safety and health of other persons, by ensuring they operate commercial vehicles unimpaired by fatigue, drugs or alcohol.
- Employers must, where relevant to their operations, ensure that their commercial vehicle drivers have received instruction and training on driver fatigue management.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

