



INDUSTRY

# SAFETY ALERT

## Worker Fatigue and Journey Management

**Date of Incident:** May 2024

**Details:** Two workers were returning from doing early morning bird surveys when the driver fell asleep at the wheel on a Forest Service Road in the Bulkley-Nechako region of BC. The vehicle was written off after it left the road and struck a tree. All of the air bags deployed and the passenger side rear roof partially collapsed.

The two occupants were taken to hospital as a precautionary measure but were cleared to go back to work.

The investigation determined that the 68 year old driver was on day 6 of a scheduled 19-day shift that involved 10.5-hour work days. The driver had completed a 1.5 hour commute followed by 7 hours of field work and was 30 minutes into the commute back when the incident occurred.

The workers were in lodgings where others were not required to awaken at 4:00 a.m. so noise levels did not allow for an early sleep. The driver had insisted on driving the return trip.

These factors all attributed to a completely avoidable incident that put workers at undue risk. There were several wrongs in this incident, but the greatest was that no fatigue or journey management had been considered and hence no controls put in place.

**Learnings & Suggestions:** The major learnings which could have easily been at the cost of workers lives were:

- Fatigue and journey management must be addressed on every project prior to mobilization. These need to include specific instruction on driving assignments considering all of the relevant factors and these must be effectively communicated to all workers.
- Risk assessments on each individual driver must be conducted while considering shift length, daily work duration, individual experience, competency any conditions that might introduce fatigue or impede alertness.
- Passengers should always remain vigilant and avoid distractions in an effort to help the driver spot hazards, remain alert, monitor the radio and assess for fatigue levels along the drive.

Too often, driving is considered a routine task when in fact, it poses the highest risk to workers with the potential to cause the most serious harm.

**Resources:** Visit BC Forest Safety's [fatigue management web page](#) for more helpful information and resources.



BC Forest Safety

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