

# TIRED DRIVERS ARE AS RISKY AS DRUNK DRIVERS

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## 1 Background.

Sleep-deprived drivers are less alert than those who have drunk more than the legal limit of alcohol, according to new research.

A study published last week in the daily newspaper, The New Vision found that fatigue can reach dangerous levels at a much earlier stage than has been assumed.

## 2 Methods and procedure.

The authors, from Kampala and Jinja, tested responses of 39 volunteers along the KampalaJinja highway after sleep deprivation and after drinking alcohol equivalent to the legal driving limit in Uganda.

They found that those who had been up since 6am performed worse in tests between 10.30pm and midnight than those who were tested in the morning with excess alcohol in their bloodstream.

The researchers suggest that countries which set drink-driving limits should consider setting restrictions to prevent people who have been awake for more than 18 hours from driving, piloting aircraft, or operating machinery. Tiredness is estimated to play a part in between 15 percent and 40 percent of road accidents in Uganda especially on highways, they say, but few attempts have been made to work out at what point in the day or night that tiredness reaches serious levels.

The implications of fatigue for safe performance are well recognized particularly in road safety, but in other settings as well, write Andrew Williamson of the School of Psychology University of New South Wales, and Anne-Marie Feyer from the University of Otago, Dunedin.

### **3 Results.**

Tired road users tend to become selfish and consequently making poor driving decisions such as overtaking in areas where they are not supposed to. This is the leading cause of road accident on Ugandan highways. Says Dr. Steve Kasiima, director of traffic, Uganda Police Force.

The volunteers, lorry drivers and others majority of whom were driving commercial vehicles were put through tests to measure thinking speed and physical reactions, coordination and attention span. They carried out the tests after a day and night of wakefulness and after drinking alcohol.

### **4 Conclusion.**

The researchers found that commonly experienced levels of sleep deprivation staying awake for 17 to 19 hours - depressed performance in the same way as drinking a couple of glasses of alcohol. It is therefore recommended that for anyone to get behind the wheel, they should not be under any form of extreme fatigue.

It is also recommended for the traffic enforcement team to find a measure by which extreme tiredness can be assessed so as to start penalizing those who drive under extreme fatigue. This will tremendously reduce traffic accident, especially those occurring on highways.