Seven Statistics: The Hazards of Micro-Sleeps



A microsleep is a light, involuntary sleep lasting from a few seconds to half a minute. Here are seven statistics relating to this potentially deadly and not-uncommon occurrence.

Here are seven statistics on micro-sleeps:

1. Of 1,000 drivers interviewed, 45 percent of men admitted to having experienced microsleeps while behind the wheel, while 22 per cent of female drivers admitted to doing so. (Brake Road Safety Charity, United Kingdom)
2. You won't know when you are having a microsleep, but a telltale sign that you've just had one is suddenly snapping into alertness with a jerk of your head.
3. Five things you should do if you feel sleepy while driving are: pull over at a store or restaurant and pick up a coffee or other caffeinated beverage; park your vehicle; quickly drink the beverage; take a 15-minute nap and after the caffeine kicks in, resume driving.
4. A driver who falls into a five-second microsleep while traveling at 62 miles per hour (100 km/h) will cover some 500 feet (140 meters) of ground without being aware of anything going on around him/her.
5. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association estimated that workplace accidents caused by sleep deprivation cost American companies $31 billion a year in damages.
6. People tend to associate sleeping with having their eyes shut, but sleep researchers say that a person experiencing a microsleep can have his or her eyes open, yet that person's brain is processing none of the information relayed by the eyes to the brain.
7. Four factors that contribute to microsleeps on the job or while driving are long working hours, a string of consecutive night shifts, working alternating shifts and performing monotonous tasks.

A microsleep is a light, involuntary sleep usually lasting from a few seconds to less than 30 seconds. It can greatly jeopardize a worker's safety, whether it occurs while someone is driving, operating potentially dangerous equipment or monitoring safety-sensitive operations.