

Dr. Shirazi's Pilot and Driver Safety Press Release - 7/21/09

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FALLING ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL: TRUCK DRIVERS AND EVEN AIRLINE PILOTS SEEK TREATMENT FOR OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA (OSA)

CONEJO, CA – July 21, 2009 -- According to a report issued by the Associated Press on September 24, 2008, two pilots for Hawaii's Go! Airlines, who slept through their flight's landing procedure, were suspended for careless and reckless operation of an aircraft by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The National Transportation Safety Board has cited pilot fatigue as a factor in several recent crashes, including a February 2009 crash near Buffalo, New York that killed 50 people.

Of the 18 million Americans who have **sleep apnea**, many are commercial drivers and pilots who are treated successfully with **oral mouth devices, C-PAP** (continuous positive airway pressure) masks, or **orthodontics**. **Dr. David Shirazi at The TMJ and Sleep Therapy Centre of Conejo Valley**, says that treatment is simple and often covered by health insurance.

It is commonly reported that commercial drivers (bus drivers, truck drivers and railroad workers) suffering from excessive daytime drowsiness are a major cause of fatal accidents. Federal regulations in the near future will mandate truck and bus drivers in safety sensitive positions to be tested for **sleep disorders** to decrease crash rates and fatalities. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has taken positive action with regard to commercial drivers and has established a panel to determine the prevalence of obstructive sleep apnea on commercial truck drivers, and the FAA is following in its footsteps. Airlines, pilot unions and federal officials have until September 1, 2009 to develop new rules to limit fatigue among pilots, the FAA recently announced in a move to address one of the industry's most contentious safety issues.

If you are suffering from daytime drowsiness, Dr. Shirazi provides some warning signs that might indicate that you have **sleep apnea**:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Frequent episodes of obstructed breathing during sleep. (You may be unaware of this symptom, realizing it only after a bed partner has brought it to your attention.)

- Loud snoring
- Clenched jaw
- Morning headaches
- Un-refreshing sleep
- Dry mouth upon awakening
- High blood pressure
- Overweight/obesity
- Irritability
- Change in personality
- Depression
- Difficulty concentrating
- Excessive perspiration during sleep
- Heartburn
- Reduced libido
- Chest retraction during sleep in young children (chest pulls in)

- Insomnia
- Frequent nocturnal urination
- Restless sleep
- Nocturnal snorting, gasping, choking (may wake self up)
- Rapid weight gain
- Confusion upon awakening

“**Sleep apnea** and its risks should not be taken lightly,” says Dr. Shirazi. “We certainly want our commercial drivers and pilots to be free of **sleep apnea** for safety and health reasons, but everyone who operates a car or other motor vehicle should be as well.”

For more information on symptoms, testing and treatments of sleep apnea, visit www.tmjconejo.com or call 866-496-5710.

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