



## April 2008 - Newsletter

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### Wrong Way to Stretch Our Days

The news was startling, to be sure. On November 9<sup>th</sup> of 2007, WCBS-TV (New York City) reported that Frontier Airlines confirmed a 2004 incident in which both pilots on a Baltimore to Denver flight fell asleep and were awakened only by frantic radio calls from air traffic controllers. When asked to comment, the National Transportation Safety Board admitted that there had been five similar incidents in the last five years. "It's time do to something before we have to investigate an accident that is catastrophic," remarked NTSB Chairman Mark Rosenker.

Also in early March, the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission acknowledged a videotape of security guards sleeping while on the job at a nuclear plant in Pennsylvania. An extensive investigation of the problem was immediately launched.

But according to a study by the National Sleep Foundation released on March 4<sup>th</sup>, sleep deprivation is a problem for all of us. One thousand randomly selected participants averaged only 6 hours and 40 minutes of sleep on weeknights. Most of these individuals indicated a need for at least an additional 40 minutes to be at their best. And most astonishingly, one-third of those surveyed admitted that they had "fallen asleep or become very sleepy at work in the past month."

While sleepy workers know they're not performing as well as they could during the day, work is what's keeping them up nights according to the study, which found that workdays are getting longer and time spent working from home averages close to four-and-a-half hours each week.

It seems that people are also trying to squeeze in more time for themselves and their families, even if it means less sleep. The average wake-up is at 5:35AM followed by about two hours at home before heading out to work. The average bedtime is 10:53PM.

"Sleep deprivation is bad for your brain when you are trying to do high-level [thinking] tasks," according to J. Christian Gillin, MD, of the University of California at San Diego. "It may have serious consequences both on performance and on the way your brain functions."

If sleep deprivation is a problem for you or a family member, consider a consultation with your physician as well as a call to your Employee Assistance Program. Your doctor can pinpoint physical reasons for your problem while your EAP will help you address stress overloads and time management problems which can rob you of restorative sleep.