Daylight saving time is hot garbage

This story was originally published on March 12th, 2016. It has been updated to include video, but it has not otherwise been edited as daylight saving time remains trash.

When Benjamin Franklin proposed daylight saving time – he invented it – it was a *joke.* These days, it's more like a practical joke we play on ourselves every single year. It's time to end this dumb prank once and for all.

Originally, Franklin joked that he had been awakened after a long night (probably, knowing Franklin, of partying) and was surprised to see light.

> *I looked at my watch, which goes very well, and found that it was but six o'clock; and still thinking it something extraordinary that the sun should rise so early, I looked into the almanac, where I found it to be the hour given for his rising on that day. I looked forward, too, and found he was to rise still earlier every day till towards the end of June; and that at no time in the year he retarded his rising so long as till eight o'clock.*

Franklin, who presents himself in the letter as rising at noon, goes on to write that if people were to use the six hours of sunlight to do work, they'd require six hours fewer of candles. This is basically a punch at the French. (For more details, you should check out this *National Geographic* article.)

*Daylight saving time was introduced for American war efforts*Daylight saving time wasn't introduced in America until

1918, when it was meant to conserve energy for World War I. The thought was, essentially, Franklin's: that people tend be more active in the evenings, so the extra daylight there would mean fewer hours where people lit their houses at night. After the war, farmers lobbied to get the law repealed; turns out, it's easier to do farm work when the rest of the world is also on the sun's schedule. In 1942, during World War II, DST was enacted again, but year-round. Afterwards, well, adoption varied.

DST was reintroduced by the federal government in 1966, though whether or not it was observed was up to states (Arizona and Hawaii don't observe DST, for example). And in 2007, a law passed by President George W. Bush expanded DST by more than a month — it now runs from March to November.

Proponents of DST will tell you that it saves energy. This is because a study in the 1970s found a 1 percent benefit to energy use in daylight saving time. You may notice, though, that the 1970s are now 40 years ago, and energy consumption has changed somewhat in the interim. More recent research shows no difference in energy usage in places where it doesn't go into effect, compared to places observing DST. A few studies suggest daylight saving time actually means more energy is used, rather than less. Take, for example, this 2008 paper that looks at southern Indiana: DST actually *increases* electricity demand to the tune of $9 million a year in Indiana alone.

*Then there's the human cost: fatigue*And then there's the physiological cost of DST: fatigue. The US Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention regard insufficient sleep as a public health problem *in general* — and the hour you lose in the spring makes it worse. About 60 percent of Americans feel the effects of lost sleep the Monday after they spring forward, according to the Better Sleep Council, the "consumer education" arm of sleep products manufacturers. Almost three-quarters of workers over 30 say the lost sleep affects their work — often by slowing productivity, the survey found. Several major disasters have also been chalked up to sleep deprivation, including the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Chernobyl nuclear accident, and the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*. Not all of the effects of sleep deprivation are that extreme, but a study in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* notes that workplace injuries rise on the Monday we spring forward, probably because workers are missing, on average, about 40 minutes of sleep.

People are also likelier to have automobile accidents when they're tired, which is why it's not really surprising to find out that there's a spike in traffic accidents after DST goes into effect. The Monday afterward, automobile accidents increase, according to a 2001 study in the *Journal of Sleep Medicine*. Just how much depends on the study; a paper presented at the American Economic Association showed that traffic accidents rise by about 6 percent nationally for the next six days after we move our clocks forward. The spike in crashes is likely due to sleep deprivation.

Some rogue elements will argue for a perpetual DST. After all, more people are awake and active at 7PM than 7AM. This upsets parents, who point out that children are more likely to be struck and killed by cars in the dark — and moving to DST permanently means a lot more dark in the morning. Personally, I don't care whether we stick with DST or standard time. What I want, most of all, is to stop resetting my damn clock. The time change is, quite literally, a killer.

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