

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

Toolbox Talk Two - Managing Fatigue Risks



Suggested Approach for Organisations

The suggested approach for sites on this issue is to focus more on the system for controlling excessive or fatiguing working hours, rather than individual, one-off instances. Sites should be reminded that the legal duty is on employers to manage risks from fatigue, irrespective of any individual's willingness to work the extra hours.

- Have a good base shift pattern
- Reduce or limit overtime working
- Assess changes to working hours
- Manage fatigue just like any other hazard
- Investigate incidents of fatigue
- Consider fatigue factors in accident/incident investigations

Night Shifts

- Restrict number of night shifts (to 4 maximum if possible).
- Allow at least 2 days off following night shift.
- Avoid keeping workers on permanent night shifts.

Early starts

- Move early shift starts before 6am forward (e.g. 7am not 6am start).
- Limit the number of successive early starts i.e. before 7am (to 4 maximum if possible).
- Shifts involving an early start should be shorter in length to counter the impact of fatigue later in the shift.

Rest periods

- Allow minimum of 12 hours between shifts and avoid 'quick return' of 8 hours if possible. (Rest period between shifts should permit sufficient time for commuting, meals and sleep.)
- Plan some weekends off, advisably at least every 3 weeks.

Rotation

- Rotate shifts quickly (e.g. every 2-3 days). Avoid rotating shifts every 1-2 weeks.
- Use forward rotation (morning/afternoon/night) for preference.

Social considerations

- Arrange start/finish times of the shift to be convenient for public transport, social and domestic activities.
- Consider travelling time of workforce.
- Allow some individual choice where possible to accommodate larks/owls and family commitments.
- Keep the timing of shifts regular and predicable but also allow employees to have some flexibility to choose their own work schedule.

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Specific Documents

- Fatigue Management Plan.
- A policy on working hours.
- Base-Line shift roster/pattern.
- Sample of working hours over 30 days.
- Arrangements for overtime.

Enforcement and advice

- Support for enforcement can be provided where there is evidence of excessive overtime being worked by staff involved in safety critical (MAH) work and operators are not monitoring overtime; or following an incident where fatigue was a significant factor.
- HSWA Section 3 responsibilities towards contractors and other non-employee staff on site are especially pertinent.
- MHSW Regulations 1999 Regulations 3 (Risk Assessment) and 5 (Arrangement) are the key areas for enforcement.

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