

Fatigue in the Workplace*



Fatigue is feeling tired weary from sleep, mental or physical work, or stress. Boring repetitive tasks can increase feelings of fatigue. Fatigue is either acute or chronic.

Acute fatigue results from short-term sleep loss or heavy physical/mental work. Chronic fatigue syndrome is the constant, severe tiredness that is not relieved by rest. Acute fatigue syndrome can be resolved by sleep. Chronic fatigue syndrome is constant and not relieved by rest. The exact cause of this syndrome is still unknown.

Why is it important?

Fatigue affects a person's ability to work safely. Fatigue increases the risk of injuries and other incidents. Look for signs or effect of fatigue on the job. Fatigue is hard to measure, so it is difficult to isolate its effect on injury rates. Studies shown the risk of errors at work increases when workers sleep less than 7.5-8.5 hours or are awake more than 17 hours. Increase hours awake can be similar to elevated blood alcohol levels.

Key characteristics of hazard

Lack of sleep is the most common cause of fatigue.

Other factors that contribute to fatigue are:

- Shift rotation
- Balanced workloads

- Intensity and timing of tasks
- Available resources
- Environment (lighting, ventilation, temperature)
- Long, difficult or boring tasks
- Alcohol, caffeine, medication, and sleep disorders

Fatigue impacts performance. Most incidents occur when people are naturally sleepy — between midnight and 6 am, and 1 to 3 pm.

Fatigue can:

- Reduce decision making ability
- Impair judgment
- Lower motivation
- Slow reaction time
- Reduces alertness
- Affect communication
- Increase risk-taking
- Lower productivity
- Increase errors in judgment
- Increase forgetfulness
- Impair a worker's ability to stay awake

Long-term fatigue can contribute to poor health including appetite loss, digestive problems, and chronic conditions like depression. This can increase sick time, absenteeism, turnover, and medical costs.

Preventative next steps

- Train supervisors and workers to recognize the immediate signs and symptoms of fatigue:
 - » Tiredness
 - » Memory lapses
 - » Difficulty concentrating
 - » Slower reaction time
- Create shift schedules that give workers enough time to sleep and considers other time like breaks, commuting etc
- Provide a well-lit and comfortable work environment which is free from noise and other hazards
- Design the job smartly/provide rotations
- Provide amenities if the job needs long shifts (e.g. accommodation, nap-room, meals etc.)



For additional resources visit:

WorkSafeBC: [Fatigue impairment](#)

CCOHS: [Fatigue](#)

OSHA: [Long Work Hours, Extended or Irregular Shifts, and Worker Fatigue](#)

Manufacturing Safety Alliance of BC: safetyalliancebc.ca

Toolbox Talk

Name of Facilitator: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Safety Specific Training Requirements: Identified Hazards/concerns

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Employee feedback/questions/recommendations

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Workers who attended

Name	Initial	Name	Initial
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Key Talking Points
