



Toolbox Talk

FATIGUE AWARENESS

Fatigue increases the risk of injuries or other accidents, even though someone's fatigue may be the result of work or out of work factors. Management and individuals need to work together to reduce the risk and impact of fatigue. The only cure for fatigue is sleep, but it's best not to get fatigued in the first place.

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is the state of feeling very tired, exhausted, weary, or sleepy. Fatigue results from a lack of sleep and can be heightened from prolonged mental activity or long periods of stress or anxiety. Boring or repetitive tasks can also increase feelings of tiredness.

Risk Assessment/Hazards

Train supervisors and workers to recognize the immediate signs and symptoms of fatigue, which include the following:

- tiredness or sleepiness
- memory lapses
- difficulty concentrating
- slower reaction times

The following are identified as hazards resulting from fatigue that can reduce:

- the ability to make decisions
- communication skills
- attention
- the ability to handle stress
- reaction time
- productivity and performance

Hazards from fatigue can also result in increased:

- errors in judgment
- sick time, absenteeism, and rate of turnover
- medical costs

Control Measures

Fatigue is a workplace hazard, and it needs to be managed in the same way as other hazards. Employers can:

- manage the workplace environment and practices to minimize the factors that could contribute to fatigue
- make sure employees understand why they need to manage the risk of fatigue and how to minimize their fatigue level
- encourage staff to manage their personal out of work fatigue risk factors

Tips for employees

Work with your employer to manage fatigue-related risks in the workplace.

At work:

- vary work tasks so you stay alert
- take regular breaks
- tell your supervisor or manager

Outside of work:

- making sleep a priority
- improving the quality and quantity of your sleep; have a regular bed time routine, make sure your bedroom is dark, cool and comfortable; get treatment for sleep disorders
- choose what you eat and drink carefully: eat light nutritious meals (heavy meals make you drowsy); drink plenty of water; minimize your caffeine and alcohol intake
- learn the warning signs of fatigue and to recognize them in yourself, so that you can take a break or have a power nap