



Trainees - Apprentices
Labour Hire - Training

Health and Safety Fatigue Management Procedure

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1. Purpose

ATC Work Smart is committed to the health and safety of all people at the workplace. The purpose of this procedure is to establish a systematic process to identify and manage work health and safety (WHS) risks associated with fatigue at ATC Work Smart workplaces.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Managers

- > Utilise a risk assessment process to identify and manage any risks associated with fatigue within their area of responsibility.
- > Consult with workers during the identification and management of risks associated with fatigue.
- > Monitor fatigue levels of workers within their area of responsibility.
- > Ensure workers are not placing themselves at risk of injury as result of their levels of fatigue.

Field Officers/Recruitment Consultants

- > Monitor fatigue levels of on-hire workers within their area of responsibility
- > Ensure on-hire workers are not placing themselves at risk of injury as result of their levels of fatigue

- > Consult with host employers during the identification and management of risks associated with fatigue

Workers

- > Support their manager to identify fatigue risk factors and appropriate controls to manage these risks.
- > Take responsibility for the management of their own fatigue levels, ensuring they turn up fit for work in a state that enables them to conduct their work in a safe manner.
- > Notify their line supervisor or manager if they believe their ability to safely undertake their duties is impaired due to fatigue.

3. What is fatigue

Fatigue is a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion which reduces a person's ability to perform work safely and effectively. It can occur because of prolonged mental or physical activity, sleep loss and/or disruption of the internal body clock. Fatigue can be caused by factors which may be work related, non-work related or a combination of both and can accumulate over time.

4. What are the risks associated with fatigue?

Fatigue can adversely affect safety at the workplace. Fatigue reduces alertness, which may lead to errors and an increase in incidents and injuries. As a worker experiences rising fatigue levels, there are corresponding physiological, behavioural and emotional changes that may impact on the ability of a worker to safely undertake work. The following signs or symptoms may indicate a worker is affected by fatigue:

- > excessive yawning or falling asleep at work
- > short-term memory problems and an inability to concentrate
- > noticeably reduced capacity to engage in effective interpersonal communication
- > impaired decision-making and judgment
- > reduced hand-eye coordination or slow reflexes
- > other changes in behaviour, for example repeatedly arriving late for work
- > increased rates of unplanned absence.

A fatigued worker may also experience symptoms not obvious to others including:

- > feeling drowsy
- > headaches
- > dizziness
- > difficulty concentrating
- > blurred vision or impaired visual perception
- > a need for extended sleep during days off work.

5. Management of fatigue

Managers must utilise the "WHS Risk Management Procedure" to identify and manage the risks associated with fatigue. This involves the following steps:

- > **STEP 1** – Hazard identification
Identify the factors which may cause fatigue in the workplace.
- > **STEP 2** – Risk assessment: inherent risk
Assess the risks of injury from fatigue.
- > **STEP 3** – Control risks
Control the risks by implementing the most effective risk control measures reasonably practicable in the circumstances.
- > **STEP 4** – Risk assessment with control measures: residual risk
Re-assess whether the risks of injury from fatigue are adequately controlled.
- > **STEP 5** – Monitor and review control measures
Review risk control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

When undertaking the risk assessment, it is important for managers to ensure workers are consulted at each of step of the process. This encourages everyone to work together to identify fatigue risk factors and implement effective control measures. Consultation also helps to raise awareness about the risks associated with fatigue.

6. Identification of factors that may cause fatigue

The first step in the risk management process is to identify all reasonably foreseeable factors which could contribute to and increase the risk of fatigue. Fatigue is often caused by a number of inter-related factors which can be cumulative. Common factors that may contribute to fatigue are:

- > Work schedules which limit the time workers can physically and mentally recover from work. This may include workers who undertake shift work, night work, work extended hours or are not able to take regular breaks.
- > Job demands, particularly work that requires extended periods of work that is physically or mentally demanding.
- > Sleep, including the length of sleep time, the quality of sleep and the time since sleep.
- > Environmental conditions, such as exposure to heat, cold, vibration or noise, can make workers tire quicker and may impair performance.
- > Non-work related factors, such as a worker's lifestyle, family responsibilities or health may all increase the risk of fatigue.

Methods that managers may utilise to identify whether there are any of the above risk factors affecting their workers include:

- > consulting with workers
- > examining work practices and systems of work
- > examining human resource records and data such as timesheets and overtime payments
- > incident data and the findings of incident investigations
- > seeking advice and information from subject matter experts

7. Assessing the risk

Once a manager has identified factors which may cause fatigue, they should undertake an assessment of the risk to consider:

- > where, which and how many workers are likely to be at risk of becoming fatigued
- > how often fatigue is likely to occur
- > the degree of harm which may result from fatigue
- > whether existing control measures are effective
- > what action should be taken to control the risk of fatigue
- > how urgently action to control the risk needs to be taken.

When assessing risks, contributors to fatigue should not be considered in isolation. For example, job demands, hours of work and environmental conditions may all increase the risk of fatigue in the workplace. The risks of injury from fatigue may increase if workers work long daily hours in a physically or mentally demanding job.

8. Controlling the risk

The best way to control the health and safety risks arising from fatigue is to eliminate the factors identified as causing fatigue at the source. If elimination is not reasonably practicable, the risks must be minimised. The determination of the most effective controls to manage the risks associated with fatigue should always be identified in consultation with workers where possible.

Common control measures:

Work scheduling

- > designing working hours and rosters to allow for good sleep opportunity and enough recovery time between work days for travelling, eating, washing and sleeping.
- > ensuring workers have and take adequate and regular breaks to rest, eat and rehydrate
- > implementing processes to manage accrued leave balances and requests for leave
- > considering future schedules when approving request for leave and ensuring leave is reflected in schedules
- > considering alternative options to face-to-face meetings, for example video conferencing so workers are not required to spend time travelling to meetings.

Job demands

- > ensuring fit-for-purpose equipment is used at the workplace (e.g. ergonomic furniture)
- > redesigning the job to limit periods of excessive mental or physical demands
- > considering job rotation to limit a build-up of mental and physical fatigue
- > developing contingency plans for potential situations where workers may have to unexpectedly work longer hours
- > planning for expected changes in work flow including anticipated peaks and troughs throughout the year.

Non-work related factors

- > consulting workers about factors impacting on their personal fatigue levels

- > providing education and awareness to workers on the risks associated with fatigue, how it relates to their health and safety duties and strategies to manage their personal fatigue risks
- > establishing health and wellbeing programs to address risk factors associated with fatigue.

9. Review requirements

Once control measures are implemented, managers should establish mechanisms to monitor and review the controls, to ensure they continue to be effective in managing fatigue. Consideration may be given to implementing trial periods and encouraging workers to provide feedback on their effectiveness.

Control measures should also be reviewed when:

- > there is any indication risks are not being controlled
- > new tasks, equipment, procedures, rosters or schedules are introduced
- > changes are proposed to the work environment, working hours and schedules
- > there is an incident due to fatigue at the workplace
- > new information regarding fatigue becomes available
- > every two years.

10. Driving and travel

Fatigue slows a driver's reaction time and affects their scanning ability and information processing skills. Workers driving vehicles to and from work or for long periods of their working day should:

- > plan any driving or travel well in advance
- > avoid driving after being awake for a continuous period of 17 hours
- > avoid driving if they have not accumulated more than five hours sleep in the previous 24 hours or 12 hours sleep in the previous 48 hours
- > avoid driving for more than 8 hours in any one day
- > ensure adequate sleep the night before a long journey
- > share driving where possible
- > take a rest break from driving of at least 10 minutes every two hours or more frequently if feeling tired
- > keep your mind active by listening to the radio while driving
- > avoid using the heater as it can make you feel drowsy. In cool conditions direct warmth to your feet and open the window a little to allow fresh air on your face.