

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

November 2020

WORKER FATIGUE

Worker fatigue increases the risk for illnesses and injuries. Accident and injury rates are 18% greater during evening shifts and 30% greater during night shifts when compared to day shifts.

What Causes Worker Fatigue?

Several factors including too little, poor quality or interrupted sleep over a period of time can cause fatigue. Fatigue is the body's signal that a rest period is needed. Long work hours and extended and irregular shifts may be stressful physically, mentally and emotionally. The body operates on a circadian rhythm sleep/wake cycle. It is naturally programmed for sleeping during night hours. Demanding work schedules may disrupt the body's natural cycle, leading to increased fatigue, stress and lack of concentration.

How Can Fatigue Affect Worker Safety and Health?

Fatigue can cause weariness, sleepiness, irritability, reduced alertness, impaired decision making, and lack of motivation, concentration and memory. Studies have shown that fatigue is linked to health problems such as:

- Heart disease
- Stomach and digestive problems
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Reproductive problems
- Depression
- Some cancers (breast and prostate)
- Sleep disorders
- Poor eating habits/obesity
- Worsening of existing chronic diseases such as diabetes and epilepsy

What is healthy sleep?

- Make sure that your sleep period is 7-9 hours daily without disruptions.
- Try to sleep at the same time every day.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine prior to bedtime to improve sleep quality.
- If working evening or nights, make sure that sleep has occurred within the last 8 hours before going to work.
- If napping before work, make sure that the duration is less than 45 minutes or greater than 2 hours to allow for a complete sleep/wake cycle.
- Make sure that the sleeping environment is comfortable, cool, dark and quiet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a balanced diet. Maintain a healthy weight.
- If you have difficulty sleeping, keep a sleep diary and talk to your doctor.



Sources:

- <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workerfatigue/prevention.html>
- <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workerfatigue/hazards.html#fatigue>



Contact Us

(707) 428-1830
www.nbsia.org
MemberServices@nbsia.org