

TOOLBOX TALK

# Fatigue Management

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Injury rates are 18% higher on evening shifts and 30% higher on night shifts (OSHA). An estimated 1 in 8 workplace injuries is related to fatigue (NIOSH). Fatigue costs U.S. employers \$218 billion+ per year. A fatigued worker is as impaired as an intoxicated one.

**30%**

More injuries on night shifts vs day shifts (OSHA)

**1 in 8**

Workplace injuries related to fatigue (NIOSH)

**100%**

Fatigue is manageable with proper controls

## 5 Rules for Managing Fatigue at Work

Fatigue impairs judgment, slows reactions, and causes fatal mistakes — manage it:

**1**

### GET 7-9 HOURS OF SLEEP — NON-NEGOTIABLE

Less than 6 hours doubles your injury risk. Sleep is not a luxury — it's critical safety equipment for your brain.

**2**

### LIMIT CONSECUTIVE EXTENDED SHIFTS

After 10 hours on the job, injury risk increases significantly. After 12+ hours it can double. Rotate workers.

**3**

### TAKE REAL BREAKS — NOT JUST A PAUSE

Short breaks every 2 hours help maintain alertness. Step away from the task. Eat, hydrate, rest your eyes.

**4**

### REPORT WHEN YOU'RE TOO FATIGUED TO WORK SAFELY

Speak up without shame. A fatigued worker operating heavy equipment endangers everyone on site.

**5**

### SUPERVISORS: WATCH FOR FATIGUE IN YOUR CREW

Slow reactions, poor decisions, yawning, irritability, microsleeps — recognize the signs and act on them.

## Shift Start Fatigue Check

- Did you get at least 7 hours of sleep before this shift?
- Are you alert enough to operate equipment and make safe decisions?
- How many hours have you worked in the last 24 hours? 48 hours?
- Is anyone on the crew showing signs of fatigue right now?
- Are scheduled breaks planned and will they actually be taken?

## Fatigue Risk Factors — What Makes It Worse

### Night shifts / Rotating shifts

Working against your body clock. Night workers get 1-4 hours less sleep. Error rates peak between 2-4 AM.

### Extended hours (>10 hrs/day)

After 10 hours, injury risk rises sharply. After 16 hours awake, impairment equals 0.05% blood alcohol.

### Insufficient sleep (<6 hours)

Less than 6 hours of sleep doubles your risk. Chronic short sleep accumulates a "sleep debt" you can't repay.

### Physical demands + heat

Heavy physical work and hot environments accelerate fatigue. Hydration and breaks are essential.

### Early morning starts (<5 AM)

Disrupts the deepest phase of sleep. Workers often don't get enough sleep before very early shifts.

### Monotonous / Repetitive tasks

Boredom accelerates mental fatigue. Vigilance drops significantly after 20-30 minutes of repetitive work.

## Common Fatigue Mistakes That Cause Injuries

- ✗ "I can push through it" — fatigue impairs you as much as alcohol. You cannot willpower your way out
- ✗ Relying on caffeine as a substitute for sleep — caffeine masks fatigue temporarily but doesn't fix it
- ✗ Driving home exhausted after a long shift — 1 in 5 fatal vehicle crashes involve a drowsy driver (NIOSH)
- ✗ Scheduling critical or high-risk tasks at the end of a 12-hour shift — that's when errors peak

## Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Nap strategically — a 20-minute nap before a night shift improves alertness significantly
- ✓ Bright light helps — exposure to bright light during night shifts helps reset your alertness cycle
- ✓ After 16 hours awake you're as impaired as 0.05% BAC — plan your commute and don't drive drowsy
- ✓ Supervisors: schedule the most dangerous tasks for the first half of the shift when alertness is highest

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. How many hours of sleep did you get before this shift?
2. Is anyone feeling too fatigued to work safely right now?
3. Are we scheduling high-risk tasks at the right time of day?
4. What can we do as a team to make sure everyone gets real breaks?
5. Would you feel comfortable telling your supervisor if you were too tired to work safely?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached:  Yes