

Health & Safety Management Plan

Appendix B –Specific Policies and Procedures

3. Fatigue at Work Policy

Policy statement

We are committed to providing safe systems of work that eliminate or minimise the adverse effects of work related fatigue. This is a shared responsibility with our workers.

Purpose

This policy seeks to ensure a safe and healthy working environment free from injury or illness resulting from fatigue. It seeks to address the risks resulting from fatigue by establishing steps to manage workers and by encouraging workers to seek assistance.

Fatigue

Fatigue (tiredness, exhaustion, lethargy or listlessness) describes a physical and/or mental state of being tired and weak. Although physical and mental fatigue are different, the two often co-exist - if someone is physically exhausted for long enough, they will also be mentally tired. Someone experiencing physical fatigue cannot function at their normal level of physical ability. Mental fatigue results more in feeling sleepy and being unable to concentrate.

Nearly everyone struggles with being overtired or overworked from time to time. Such instances of temporary fatigue usually have an identifiable cause and a likely remedy.

Contributing factors

A person's level of fatigue may be influenced by:

- Spending long periods awake.
- Inadequate or insufficient quality of sleep over an extended period.
- The type of work performed and work environment.
- Workload and length of shifts worked.
- The time of day or night worked.
- The time taken to travel to and from work.
- Consumption of alcohol.
- The use of drugs (prescription, non- prescription, illicit or other).
- Their general level of fitness and/or medical condition.
- Stress.

Managing Fatigue

Managers should catch up regularly with their workers to monitor their job performance and how they are coping with their responsibilities. This should include how they are coping with tiredness and stress. Both the employer's responsibility for health and safety and the employee's responsibility to ensure his / her own health and safety and that of others likely to be affected (eg by poor judgement as a result of fatigue) should be identified.

The Manager is responsible for:

- Preventing or minimising risks caused by heavy workloads, eg limit shifts to a safe number of hours.
- Making sure staff take regular rest breaks during the day.
- Ensuring staff who regularly work in the evenings get sufficient time off in the day.
- Being alert for the contribution of fatigue when investigating accidents.
- Supporting staff as far as possible and asking them the best way to do this.
- Keeping the confidentiality of workers struggling with fatigue.

Workers are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are fit for work.
- Recognising the symptoms of fatigue and getting sufficient sleep.
- Knowing about:
 - What to eat and when
 - The impact of caffeine and alcohol on sleep
 - The impact of prescribed medications, such as antihistamines, on their alertness
 - How to make the most of their breaks and rest times
 - How to adjust their sleeping area to promote good sleep
 - The impact of exercise on fatigue.
- Seeking assistance if suffering from fatigue.