

Fatigue and Safety at the Workplace - Quick Facts

OHS information for workers and employers

KEY POINTS

- Most people need 7.5 to 8.5 uninterrupted hours of sleep each day; less than this amount leads to a sleep debt that adds up over time
- Repeated disruptions in sleep over days and weeks can affect performance
- Consider exposure to hazards such as noise, vibration, chemicals, and extreme temperatures when extending hours of work
- When selecting PPE, consider the effects on workers having to wear PPE for extended hours

THE HAZARDS: How does fatigue affect safety?

Long work hours and/or many consecutive days of work can fatigue workers and make them feel tired, sleepy, irritable, depressed, or giddy. They may lose their appetite, have digestive problems, and are more likely to catch a cold or flu. Fatigued workers tend to:

- react more slowly than usual
- fail to respond to things going on around them or respond incorrectly
- show poor logic and judgement
- are unable to concentrate
- are less motivated and more forgetful
- have a greater tendency for taking risks

Poor performance due to fatigue is particularly apparent with tasks that are repetitive and take 30 or more minutes to complete or are complex and require concentration.

THE EFFECTS: What effects could workers experience?

Workers commonly cope with their reduced level of function by:

- working more slowly
- checking and rechecking their work
- relying on fellow workers
- choosing to carry out less critical tasks

A worker completing an extended work shift may have only 4 to 5 hours for sleep once travel, eating, and social time are taken into account. Mandatory off-duty hours increase the likelihood that a worker will rest or sleep. Rest time can be enhanced with on-site accommodation, prepared meals, and quiet accommodation.

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Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & Surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

Website

work.alberta.ca/ohs

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Fatigue, Extended Work Hours and Safety in the Workplace
<https://work.alberta.ca/documents/WHS-PUB-erg015.pdf>

Get Copies of OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

www.qp.gov.ab.ca

Occupational Health and Safety

work.alberta.ca/ohs-legislation

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