Fit to Work and Impairment

Fatigue in the Workplace

Impairment (also known as unfit for duty/work) due to fatigue at any worksite can have severe consequences for not only the impaired worker, but also their co-workers, supervisor, and employer.

Employers must ensure that all of their employees are able to perform work safely. This includes managing the hazard of impairment due to fatigue through policy and procedures.

What causes fatigue?

Mental and/or physical exhaustion can cause fatigue and lead to unstable decision-making and poor body ergonomics. Fatigue can potentially cause workplace accidents that result in injury or even death. Some causes of fatigue:

- · Lack of sleep
- Extended work hours
- Strenuous work tasks
- Intense mental or physical activities
- Poor diet
- Stress at home or work
- Travelling
- Mental health problems
- Health problems
- Medication
- Substance abuse

Risks of fatigue

- Unstable decision-making
- Poor body ergonomics
- Slowed reaction time
- Increased forgetfulness
- Short attention span

- Inability to stay awake
- Poor communication skills
- Long-term fatigue resulting in chronic health conditions

Furthermore, fatigue and alcohol have been proven to have similar effects on humans.

How to identify fatigue

- Irritability
- Reduced productivity and performance
- Constant head droops and yawning
- Difficulty staying awake
- Trouble focusing and problem solving
- More prone to making errors
- Problems recalling thoughts, conversations and actions that occurred moments before
- Depression
- Loss of appetite

Roles and Responsibilities

EMPLOYER AND SUPERVISORS

According to the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut (NU) Safety Acts, "Every employer shall maintain his or her establishment in such a manner that the health and safety of persons in the establishment are not likely to be endangered; take all reasonable precautions and adopt and carry out all reasonable techniques and procedures to ensure the health and safety of every person in his or her establishment."





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Managing fatigue includes, but is not limited to:

- providing an adequate amount of rest from work;
- developing and monitoring work systems that minimize the risk of fatigue;
- providing consultation, information, instruction and training on risks to health, safety and well-being for employees who do shift work, extended hours, or on-call work.

WORKERS

According to the NWT and NU Safety Acts, "Every worker employed on or in connection with an establishment shall, in the course of his or her employment, take all reasonable precautions to ensure his or her own safety and the safety of other persons in the establishment."

This includes:

- using the time away from work to rest and recuperate for the next shift;
- helping put work systems in place to minimize the risk of fatigue;
- participating in the training provided to gain an understanding of fatigue;
- recognizing and reporting to a manager or supervisor signs of fatigue that could potentially put self or others at risk;
- avoiding activities or behaviour that could contribute to fatigue.

JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

According to the NWT and NU Safety Acts, "The duties of a Committee at a work site are to participate in the identification and control of health and safety hazards; to promote the health and safety of workers."

This includes:

- ensuring all risk management procedures for fatigue are developed and followed by employers and workers.
- giving recommendations on procedure revisions that will help minimize the risk of fatigue.

Northwest Territories and Nunavut Safety Legislation

Mine Health and Safety Regulations, Section 2.01-2.07, Hours of Work

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, Section 86, Shift Work and Constant Effort and Exertion, and Section 35.1, Impairment

Sources

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