

June 2024

Health control plan resources

Fatigue

What is fatigue?	Why is it a health hazard?	What are the exposure monitoring requirements?	What are the health monitoring requirements?
<p>A decreased capability to perform mental or physical work, produced as a function of inadequate sleep, circadian disruption, or time on task (Brown, 1994).</p>	<p>Shift work is a common contributor to fatigue. This is particularly true of night shifts (e.g. 7pm - 7am, 11pm - 7am), sometimes referred to as 'dogwatch' or 'graveyard' shifts.</p> <p>Several studies have been able to demonstrate a link between long term shift work and several health conditions. Gastrointestinal and cardio-vascular diseases are more prevalent in people who sleep poorly or don't get enough sleep.</p> <p>Increased risks of diabetes, infertility and mental health issues have all been associated with long-term fatigue.</p>	<p>There are no exposure monitoring requirements for this hazard.</p>	<p><i>There are no requirements to monitor any potential or likely health effects of fatigue, because there are no valid techniques to do so.</i></p> <p>However, some organisations collect health information via questionnaires, for those undertaking night shift.</p> <p>Other organisations go further, by conducting longitudinal health surveillance (baseline assessment with scheduled interval follow-ups and final assessment upon leaving the industry) of those exposed to work patterns shown to impact upon health (e.g. night shifts).</p>

Controls - fatigue

Workers should ensure that they turn up fit enough to work long hours and for several days and or nights in a row. This will allow them to take a much-needed block of days off to recover. Some also propose the following:

- Roster patterns that allow for adequate sleep and life activities (eating, washing and family).
- Shift durations that consider workers' commuting times to allow for adequate sleep and life activities.
- Allow a 48-hour break after a block of night shifts and an adequate break between blocks of shifts to allow recovery.
- Allow an adequate break between shifts to enable 7 – 8 hours' sleep.
- Increase supervision during periods of low alertness (e.g. 3am to 5am).
- Provide training and information on the risks of shift work and ensure supervisors and management can recognise problems.
- Ensure breaks within shifts to mitigate fatigue.

What are the legislative obligations with regards to health records?

There are none, as this 'hazard' does not generate health records.

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