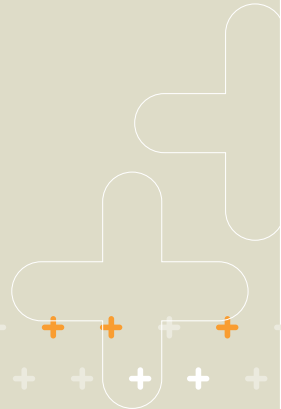





Managing shift work to minimise workplace fatigue

👉 A GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES





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Errors made by shift workers in the early hours of the morning were critical factors in the disasters at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Bhopal...

INTRODUCTION

Why is it important for small businesses to manage shift work well?

Shift work is one of the leading causes of fatigue. When people are tired they make mistakes and can put themselves and others in danger. Staff fatigue can also have a financial impact on small businesses.

Even small businesses can take simple steps to manage shift work well. This booklet aims to help small businesses put strategies in place to establish a workplace which is healthy, safe and works well for everyone.

Need more information?

The guide *Managing shift work to minimise workplace fatigue* provides more information on this subject.

It is available:

- at www.dol.govt.nz
- by calling 0800 20 90 20

↳ MANAGING FATIGUE



Sufficient sleep
High productivity
Healthy and safe environment

↗ GOOD MANAGEMENT

- Consulting with employees
- Working a safe number of hours
- Allowing enough recovery time between shifts
- Training and educating staff about fatigue management
- Good supervision
- Evaluating arrangements regularly

SHIFT WORK = FATIGUE

↘ POOR MANAGEMENT

- Not consulting with employees
- Working more than a safe numbers of hours
- Not allowing enough recovery time between shifts
- Not providing training and education about fatigue management
- Inadequate supervision
- Not evaluating arrangements



Unhealthy and dangerous environment
Low productivity
Exhaustion

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

Take some time to think about whether your business really needs to operate outside normal hours. Is there another option? If you decide you do need to run shifts, you need to manage them effectively.

These steps can help small businesses manage shift work:

- involve your employees in decisions about shift work
- work a safe numbers of hours and allow enough recovery time between shifts
- train and educate staff about fatigue management
- provide good supervision of shifts
- ensure that high-risk tasks are carried out at safe times, or under special precautions, and monitor health where staff face significant hazards
- look out for staff who are not coping (in both the short and the long term)
- assume that your arrangements, including your roster, will never be perfected, so evaluate them from time to time

A responsible employer with good staff support should be able to make these strategies part of their daily routine.

WHAT IS FATIGUE?

Fatigue is a physical and/or mental state caused by over-exertion. It can lead to impaired strength, speed, reaction time, coordination, decision making, or balance.

Causes of workplace fatigue

Shift work

Shift work is defined as work that starts before 8am and finishes after 6pm. A biological definition of shift work is any work pattern that causes a change in normal sleep patterns.

Shift work can lead to fatigue when it stops an employee getting enough sleep or requires an employee to work in the early hours of the morning, when people are normally at their sleepest.

Long work hours

Shifts that last longer than eight hours are considered to be extended shifts. Frequent extended shifts can lead to employees getting less sleep than they need. Continuing sleep restriction can affect cardiovascular health, mental health, safety and productivity.

Night work

Working at night has a greater impact than working the same number of hours in the daytime. On average shift workers lose 1-1.5 hours of sleep for each 24 hour period. This builds up a sleep debt of six hours after four nights. So working more than three or four night shifts in a row is likely to cause a significant sleep debt.

At least two consecutive full nights sleep with a normal day between is recommended in each week.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE TIRED?

Fatigue leads to human errors. Studies of error rates and productivity in round-the-clock industries show poorest performance on the night shift.

Fatigue also affects health and is associated with people feeling tired, being less vigilant, and so more likely to injure themselves, and becoming sick.

HOW DO WE RECOVER FROM FATIGUE?

The only way to recover from fatigue is to get adequate sleep. The average amount of sleep needed to be healthy and alert is between seven and nine hours a night.

THREE STEPS TO MANAGING WORKPLACE FATIGUE

Step one: Consultation

Talk to your staff about what works for them. This includes defining employer and employee responsibilities.

Step two: Evaluation

Shift-working arrangements are a compromise between your need for work to continue at a time when people are normally asleep and your employees' need to take breaks during shifts and get enough sleep between shifts.

Work out how you can balance these needs. Bear in mind that the most successful roster might be the one that staff prefer.

Step three: Training and education

Learning about how to manage shifts can help both employers and employees. You should agree on employer and employee responsibilities to prevent fatigue.

Employers should:

- make sure staff take regular rest breaks during shifts
- make food available to staff where appropriate
- provide good supervision of shifts
- be aware of the times when people are most likely to be affected by fatigue
- aim to manage shift work and overtime so that employees have regular opportunities for adequate recovery through high quality sleep
- if possible allow employees longer periods off if they must sleep during the day
- be alert for the contribution of fatigue in accident investigations
- support staff as far as possible (and ask staff about the best way to do this)

Employees should know about:

- what to eat and when
- the impact of caffeine and alcohol on sleep
- how to make the most of their breaks
- how to use their recovery and rest time appropriately
- how to adjust their sleeping area to promote good sleep
- how to recognise fatigue
- getting to and from work safely
- the impact of exercise on fatigue

Working together is the best way to create a safe and healthy working environment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON HEALTH AND SAFETY VISIT WWW.DOL.GOV.TZ OR PHONE 0800 20 90 20

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