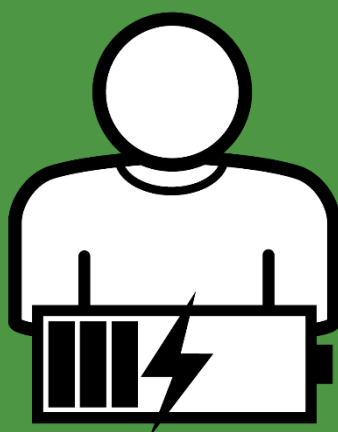


Fatigue Reduction:

Short Notice Roster or Working Pattern Changes



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Version and issue date:	V1, December 2019

Guidance

When allocating overtime or short-notice cover, you must consider several factors to make sure the shifts aren't introducing additional risk. The following should all be considered...

Rosters

Think about:

- Will the individual be potentially more at risk from fatigue because of their working pattern prior to the extra shift?
- Does the extra shift complement the other shifts being worked?

Fatigue Factors:

- Fatigue accumulates over successive work periods. This will be greater if the individual has been working successive nights or successive earlies which start before 07:00.
- The fatigue that accumulates over successive periods can be dissipated with adequate rest periods between shifts.
- Swapping between shift types is likely to introduce additional risk due to difficulties in the body adjusting to shift changes. Swapping rapidly between long and short shifts (e.g. 6-hour night, 12-hour night, 6-hour night, 12-hour night) or earlies and nights (e.g. day, night, day, night) can increase fatigue through sleep and body clock disruption.

Possible Mitigations:

- When authorising extra shifts, consider fatigue and any additional controls needed to mitigate it. Special care should be taken...
 - if this pushes individuals to more than seven consecutive 8-hour nights or four consecutive 12-hour nights; and/or
 - for individuals who have not had enough rest prior to the extra shift
- Try to keep extra shifts consistent with adjacent ones to minimise disruption. Avoid patterns of quick changes.

Quality of rest periods

Think about:

- Will the individual have had the opportunity for enough rest before working the extra shift?
- Will the quality of the rest period be affected by known/possible factors outside of work?
- How will the individual's travel arrangements to and from work impact on their ability to rest?
- What potential impact could the extra shift have on their next rest period?

Fatigue Factors:

- Ideally enough rest must include time to travel home, wind-down, have a full 7/8-hour sleep, have at least one meal and come back to work.
- The quality of the rest may be affected by non-work circumstances such as a new baby, a medical condition, or personal worries that could affect the quality of the rest period.

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- Research shows how travelling time to and from work can contribute to fatigue. For example, commutes of more than an hour have an impact on fatigue and waiting time for public transport can add significantly to the overall travelling time.

Possible Mitigations:

- Provision of a full rest period before next shift.
- Provide driving assistance if there are long travelling times.
- Consider lodging turns for staff travelling longer distances/times to a site of work. Shift swap where practical to allow longer rest period.
- When authorising extra shifts, consider how circumstances outside of work may be impacting on the individual's quality of rest.
- Ensure travel time does not significantly eat into the rest period.

Type of shift

Think About:

- Does the extra shift involve working additional hours on nights or earlies?

Fatigue Factors:

- The risks associated with working additional hours or additional shifts varies according to the type of shift. Night shifts present the greatest risk - levels of alertness are at their lowest as we are working at a time normally reserved for sleep. Early shifts, particularly where they start before 07:00, present a risk because of the likelihood of shortened sleep periods.

Possible Mitigations:

- Consider the cumulative effect of working very early or night shifts; keep such shifts to a minimum and provide enough rest before resuming the next rostered shift.

Nature of work and work environment

Think About:

- Is the work particularly mentally demanding (i.e. involving long periods of concentration?)
- When are the natural breaks or quiet periods during the work period?
- What are the unusual conditions associated with the work? e.g. degraded working
- Are there more work activities than normal?
- Are the working conditions excessively uncomfortable?

Fatigue Factors:

- If an individual is going to be working additional shifts then it is important that they have the opportunity for regular breaks; even if they are short, and, refreshments accessible in order to maintain levels of alertness.
- Very hot, very cold or wet conditions can result in a level of discomfort that results in stress and therefore increases fatigue levels.

Possible Mitigations:

- Provide additional breaks where required
- Plan for suitable refreshments to be provided

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- Vary the work being undertaken
- Where the working conditions are uncomfortable ensure opportunities are provided for the individual to take breaks away from that environment

Individual

Think About:

- How much experience does the person undertaking the work have?
- Does the individual persistently work overtime?

Fatigue Factors:

- Work is potentially more effortful and therefore more tiring for those new to the job or activity.
- Volunteering to work additional hours/shifts can mitigate the impact of fatigue slightly because it is linked with an increase in morale. However, care should be taken with individuals who persistently work overtime as this indicates they could feel compelled to or have personal difficulties that mean they want to, or have to be at work more and may not be managing their fatigue levels.

Possible Mitigations:

- Ensure arrangements for additional monitoring or additional support from a colleague or supervisor are in place.
- Avoid, where reasonably practicable, using the same individuals to work overtime.