

# FATIGUE



# Introduction

Employers have a legal obligation as well as safety and business reasons to deal with fatigue as part of an overall health and safety program.

This presentation aims to give information about the risks associated with being tired at work and guidance on how to avoid or manage fatigue so that work colleagues are less likely to be harmed by the effects.



# Fatigue

- Is a contributory factor in many railway industry accidents.
- Is a common subject for companies examining the health and safety hazards facing their operations.
- Can extend to both home and the workplace.
- Has an impact similar to alcohol impairment



# Why Manage?

There is a legal and moral obligation to manage workplace fatigue.

The benefits can be substantial including:

- Avoiding the costs of incidents
- Reducing worker absence
- Increased productivity

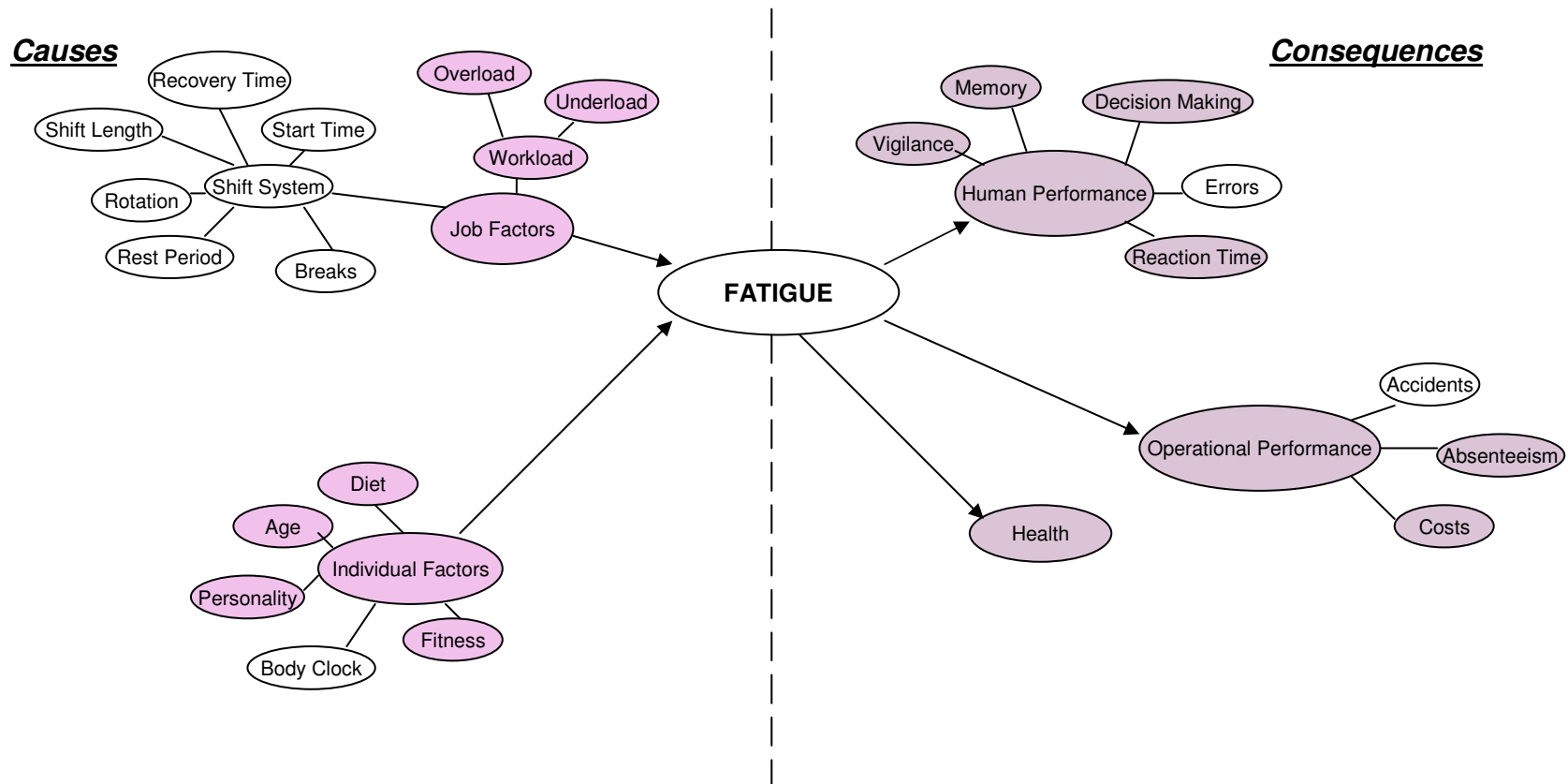


Managing fatigue demonstrates a company's due diligence in meeting fatigue-related legal requirements.



# Causes

There are a number of causes of fatigue and also a number of possible consequences.



# Major Cause

The major cause of fatigue is a lack of sleep – just once or over time.



It may be

- due to a late night and feeling tired the next day
- having too little sleep and developing a sleep debt.

Physical and mental activities tax the body. It's no surprise that you get tired from work – whether working on track or behind a computer.



# What is Sleep Debt

Most people need 8 hours of sleep a day – some more, some less.

Lack of sleep creates a sleep debt.

Cancelling that debt often can't be done in one night. For example, sleeping 6 hours instead of your usual 8 cannot usually be recovered by sleeping an extra 2 hours the following night.

The more sleep debt you have, the more good sleep it may take to pay it back.



# How can it affect Health & Safety?

- Slower reaction time
- Poor decision making
- Increased likelihood of mistakes
- Decreased performance
- Dangerous lapses from microsleeps and automatic behaviour.





# The Warning Signs

## Physical Symptoms

- Drowsiness
- Yawning
- Eyes closing or getting sore
- Vision going out of focus or blurring
- Slower physical reaction time
- Microsleeps
- Automatic behavior



# The Warning Signs

## Mental Symptoms

- Poor concentration, including wandering thoughts
- Inability to remember things you've just done, seen, or heard
- Failure to respond to changes in your surroundings or situation
- Less alertness and watchfulness
- Poor logic and judgment, including taking risks you usually wouldn't



# The Warning Signs

## Emotional Symptoms

- Bored
- Restless
- Depressed
- Giddy
- Grouchy
- Impatient



# Planning

When setting up work schedules make allowances for these situations:

- Long hours of physical or mental activity
- Inadequate breaks
- Not enough rest between work days
- Shift work (permanent or rotating)
- Extended or compressed work weeks and day-off patterns
- Working temperatures
- Being on call
- Traveling time
- Traveling in multiple time zones



# Mitigation Measures

These may include:

- Provision of lodging
- Provision of additional rest breaks in-shift
- Regular staff rotation when working in extreme temperatures
- Rescheduling of scope/scale of work
- Alteration to scheduled shift length
- Utilisation of local gangs where possible



# Tool Box Talk



## TOOL BOX TALK - FATIGUE

Fatigue has been identified as a contributory factor in many railway industry accidents. This tool box talk aims to give you some information about the risks associated with being tired at work and some guidance on how you can avoid or manage your fatigue so that you and your work colleagues are less likely to be harmed by the effects.

### FATIGUE IS CAUSED BY MANY FACTORS INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:-

- Duration of shifts, time off between shifts and changes to shift patterns.
- Ability to sleep on rest days, the quality of sleep, and sleeping disorders.
- Commuting time to/from workplace or place of booking on.
- Workload & responsibilities e.g. the different mental and/or physical task demands, role and main activities performed throughout a shift.
- Impact of second jobs and personal activities.
- Scheduling and quality of rest breaks during a shift.
- Cold starts and inadequate recovery times.
- Attitudes to work/motivation and dealing with stress in life.
- The working environment encourages fatigue rather than alertness (warm, dark, comfortable, silent).

### PREVENTION – WHAT YOU CAN DO.

- Always take scheduled breaks for water, rest and food.
- Get 8 hours sleep before starting work and try to sleep at the same time each day.
- Find a healthy balance between work and personal life.
- Always seek medical advice about sleep disorders.

### PREVENTION – WHAT THE COMPANY CAN DO.

- Ensure the availability of adequate time off between shifts.
- Where possible rotate jobs to avoid repetition and maintain awareness.
- Try to design rosters so that they are less subject to day-to-day variation.
- Monitor co-workers for signs of fatigue and relieve them whenever possible.

### CONCLUSION

Fatigue is the condition of being physically or mentally tired or exhausted. When you're fatigued **you will make errors in judgement**. Your mind or eyes can be off the task and you can make a critical error or have a near-miss incident. If you recognise the affects of fatigue in yourself, or others, stop what you are doing and raise your concerns with your immediate supervisor.

*All employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of other people, who may be affected by their activities at work. This duty implies that employees should take positive steps to understand the risk factors in their work, such as the causes of fatigue, comply with safety rules and procedures and make sure that nothing they do or fail to do at work puts anyone at risk. (MHSW Regulations 1999)*

**IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ARRIVE "FIT FOR WORK".**

Use the Tool Box Talk provided to ensure all personnel are briefed in the effects and prevention of fatigue in the workplace

