



## Working the Front Line during COVID-19

### Welcome to this week's discussion.

***The focus this week relates to the fatigue management of those working the front line.***

At times of national crisis the country needs its railway to continue delivering the vital workers and freight that keep the country running. Our ability to do this is testament to the diligence and hard work of all the railway family, but we must be careful it doesn't come at a price.

In these uncertain times many will be asked to work long hours, either because there is an urgent need to reprioritise work or because of a decrease in team size due to sickness and self-isolation.

Whatever the reason, these long hours can result in fatigue. When you're fatigued it's hard to spot dangerous situations. This can make you take risks you wouldn't normally find acceptable, putting yourself and your workmates in danger. The ability to recognise and manage fatigue will be a key factor in keeping you safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If long hours are unavoidable, there are several things managers and individuals can do to limit fatigue. Some of these are shown on the second half of this safety discussion.

Most importantly, **we need individuals to raise their hand and speak up** if they are exhausted and feel their alertness and performance is not what it should be.

If you're a team manager, it's good practice to regularly ask your team members how they are feeling (are they fatigued? Do they need a break etc). Remember that fatigue can also be caused by things outside of work.

By putting simple steps in place to manage fatigue, we will:

- **Maximise productivity and performance:**  
*Long hours can lead to reduction in spatial awareness, slowing of reactions and reduced concentration. Meaning that even simple tasks can take a lot longer.*
- **Reduce the personal impact of fatigue:**  
*Reducing sleepiness, weariness, poor concentration, irritability, stress and susceptibility to illness. Improving team morale.*
- **Reducing safety risk:**  
*A more alert worker is much less likely to take risks with their own and others safety.*

The most important time to manage fatigue risk is at the work planning stage. For those who are planning work and shifts, it is imperative that fatigue risk is high on the list of risks considered.



## Working the Front Line during COVID-19

### Things that a manager / Supervisor should consider.

- Asking their team regularly how fatigued they are.
- Creating the environment that allows people to raise their hand if they are fatigued.
- Public transport / Taxis to and from work
- Provision of hotel accommodation near the workplace
- Ensure breaks are planned in **and taken**
- Provide good quality welfare facilities
- Be mindful of start and end times and ensure 12 hour rest availability
- Know the hours staff are working and watch for exceedances
- If possible rotate lighter duties around the team
- Schedule physically demanding or intense concentration activities nearer the start of the shift
- Is the work essential or can it be scheduled for another time?
- Can the work be shared amongst other team members?

### Things that an individual should consider.

- It's OK to say you're not OK.
- Care for your work mates – regularly ask them how they are doing.
- Ensure you keep hydrated.
- Ensure that your meals are healthy.
- Try to maximise your rest and sleep opportunities.. Make sure you use them.
- Is there a safe time and location for you to take a short nap? Discuss with your manager.
- Can you exercise during your rest periods (if your work was not physically demanding)



EAT



SLEEP



HYDRATE



REPEAT



OBSERVE



CARE



MITIGATE



MONITOR

### Discuss in your teams:

- Do you plan work for your teams or contractors? Are you considering fatigue as a risk that needs to be managed?
- If you considered a work colleague was not themselves and possibly fatigued, would you raise it? Do you know how you would raise it?
- What can you or your team do differently to ensure fatigue risks are always considered?
- Think about and discuss all of the things that you and your teams can do and how we can all care for each other.