

Prevent fatigue

Signs that fatigue may be an issue at your workplace:

Physically or mentally strenuous work

Long shifts, long work weeks, late night or early morning hours

Quick shift returns: less than 12 hours off between shifts

Long commutes

Physical symptoms, such as yawning or tired eyes

Frequent errors

Heavy caffeine consumption

Noisy workplace, inadequate lighting

Conflict between work and home responsibilities

High level of absenteeism

When workers are tired, productivity can decline and injury risk can increase. Fatigue also may cause “presenteeism” (being physically present but not mentally engaged), which has been linked to costly errors, slower reaction times, and reduced performance. Chronic fatigue can have serious health consequences, including obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Making workplace changes to prevent fatigue and promote quality sleep improves employee health while increasing productivity and safety. Here’s what has worked well at other companies:

Consider how job layout, ergonomics, and lighting affect worker fatigue.

Limit noise exposure, ensure adequate ventilation, and eliminate fatigue-causing chemicals and other substances when possible. On the night shift, provide a safe place for exercise or a safe, cool, dark, and

comfortable place for 20-minute naps. Provide a break area away from the work area to aid in fatigue recovery.

Control hazards, including reducing or eliminating clutter. Uncontrolled hazards can increase worker stress, which leads to fatigue over the course of a shift.

Support flexible schedules, with personal control over scheduling when possible. Give employees control over break times so they can recover or quickly recharge from strenuous or repetitive work. Vary tasks when work is tedious or takes a long time.

Reduce or eliminate long shifts, overtime, and shift rotations.

If rotating shifts are necessary, forward rotating shifts (day shift to evening shift to night shift) are best.

Educate supervisors about fatigue management

and create a plan to continuously improve fatigue control efforts. Educate workers on the importance of healthy sleep and how to get it. Include how to get diagnosed and treated for sleep disorders such as sleep apnea.

Provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help employees manage stress, which can interfere with sleep.

Consider offering a sleep tracker to help employees see how much they are sleeping. Sleep disorder assessments can identify those who may need more help.

Ask employees what ideas they have for managing fatigue at work.



For more information, including guides on other workplace health and safety topics, visit: saif.com/twh.