

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT POLICY®

DOCUMENT SUMMARY/KEY POINTS

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Ministry of Health Guideline ([GL2007_023](#)) Fatigue - Preventing & Managing Work Related Fatigue: Guidelines for the NSW Public Health System.
- This Policy has been developed to assist employers to identify the potential for work related fatigue to become a workplace health and safety (WHS) issue, and to prevent and manage work related fatigue, as they would any other WHS risk
- NETS has a [Fatigue Risk Management System Guideline](#) which provides specific information and guidance related to NETS

CHANGE SUMMARY

- Add information and a link to NETS Fatigue Risk Management Guideline.

READ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- This document provides information to managers and supervisors about identifying, managing and eliminating risks associated with work related fatigue. All managers should read and acknowledge this policy.
- All other staff should be made aware and follow this policy.

This document reflects what is currently regarded as safe practice. However, as in any clinical situation, there may be factors which cannot be covered by a single set of guidelines. This document does not replace the need for the application of clinical judgement to each individual presentation.

Approved by:	SCHN Policy, Procedure and Guideline Committee	
Date Effective:	1 st March 2020	Review Period: 3 years
Team Leader:	Work Health Safety Manager	Area/Dept: Work Health Safety

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Purpose

The *NSW Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011* places a legal obligation on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to consult and manage risks by eliminating risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable and if not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks, to minimise those risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Ministry of Health Guideline (GL2007_023) *Fatigue - Preventing & Managing Work Related Fatigue: Guidelines for the NSW Public Health System*.

This Policy has been developed to assist managers to identify the potential for work related fatigue to become a workplace health and safety (WHS) issue, and to prevent and manage work related fatigue, as they would any other WHS risk. This includes identifying areas at increased risk for work related fatigue, determining whether work related fatigue may already be an WHS issue, and providing guidance on strategies to reduce the likelihood of work related fatigue occurring or minimise its impact where it may occur.

This Policy also outlines the mutual responsibility of managers and workers for preventing and managing work related fatigue. Managers and workers should work together with the overarching objective of maintaining their own safety as well as patient and others in the workplace.

Definitions

PCBU (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking) means any person authorised to exercise the functions of the employer of staff to which this Policy apply.

A Worker means any person working in a permanent, temporary, casual, termed appointment or honorary capacity within NSW Health such as:

- A SCHN employee
- Agency staff
- Contractor, including VMOs
- Student
- Other

Must – indicates a mandatory action required by existing Departmental policy directive, law or industrial instrument.

Should – indicates an action that should be followed unless there are sound reasons for taking a different course of action.

Safety Critical Tasks – are tasks requiring a high level of concentration, alertness and/or coordination and where the consequences of a mistake or error in judgement could cause serious injury e.g. driving a road vehicle or operating a crane or other high risk plant, working

a heights, administration of drugs or participating in medical or surgical procedures, hazardous work such as: electrical work, working with flammable or explosive substances.

Related Ministry of Health Documents

- PD2015_049 [NSW Health Code of Conduct](#)
- PD2019_010 [Leave Matters for the NSW Health Service](#)
- PD2017_040 [Recruitment and Selection of Staff of the NSW Health Service](#)
- GL2007_023 [Fatigue - Preventing & Managing Work Related Fatigue: Guidelines for the NSW Public Health System.](#)
- PD2016_045 [Employee Assistance Programs](#)
- Reasonable Workload clauses contained in NSW Public Health Awards

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is more than feeling tired and drowsy. In a work context, fatigue is a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion which reduces a person's ability to perform work safely and effectively. (Fatigue Management – A workers' guide. Safe Work Australia 2013)

Fatigue can adversely affect safety at the workplace. Fatigue reduces alertness which may lead to errors and an increase in incidents and injuries, particularly when:

- operating fixed or mobile plant, including driving vehicles
- undertaking critical tasks that require a high level of concentration
- undertaking night or shift work when a person would ordinarily be sleeping.

The following signs or symptoms may indicate a worker is fatigued:

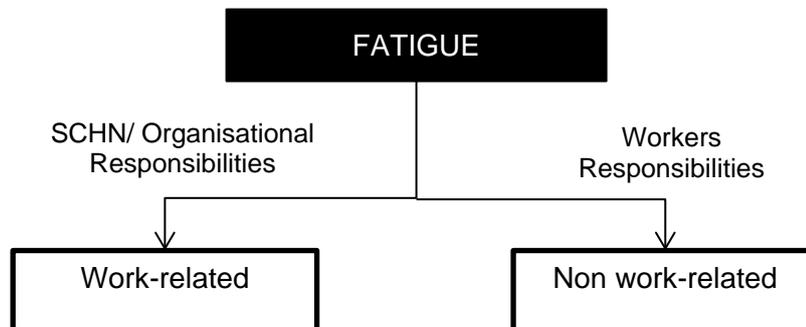
- excessive yawning or falling asleep at work
- short term memory problems and an inability to concentrate
- noticeably reduced capacity to engage in effective interpersonal communication
- impaired decision-making and judgment
- reduced hand-eye coordination or slow reflexes
- other changes in behaviour, for example repeatedly arriving late for work
- increased rates of unplanned absence.

A fatigued worker may also experience symptoms not obvious to others including:

- feeling drowsy
- headaches

- dizziness
- difficulty concentrating
- blurred vision or impaired visual perception
- a need for extended sleep during days off work.

There are work related and non-work related fatigue. It can be outlined as follows:



Work Related Fatigue

Work related fatigue is a state of mental or physical exhaustion that can affect a person's ability to function normally at work. Work related fatigue may be caused by prolonged periods of physical and/or mental exertion at work without sufficient time to rest and recover.

Non-work Related Fatigue

This Policy does not address personal lifestyle choices and their potential flow on to the workplace. However, lifestyle issues and personal commitments outside the workplace have potential to either mitigate or exacerbate how fatigue might be experienced in the workplace. Workers should be cognisant of this relationship and recognise their own role in managing lifestyle related fatigue.

Workers are responsible to:

- Present themselves to work in a fit state to conduct duties safely.
- Inform the appropriate supervisor/manager where adequate sleep, rest and/or recovery time has not been obtained.
- Comply with WHS procedures and take responsibility for their own health and safety.
- Participate in the identification & assessment of safety critical tasks and developing a safe work procedure that includes fatigue control measures.

Additionally, for SCHN employees, they are required to abide by the [NSW Health Code of Conduct](#) as well as declare any work hours outside of rostered work at the primary place of employment where it would elevate the risk of fatigue above that which would otherwise be expected.

Managers would need to seek advice from Human Resources when managing non-work related fatigue issues.

- Managers are responsible for: Implementation and compliance with WHS procedures.

- Ensure workers are aware of fatigue management guidelines and information.
- Identification & assessment of safety critical tasks performed within their department.
- In consultation with workers assess and develop safe work procedures that include fatigue management controls.
- Inform and train workers on how to manage fatigue, especially in identified high fatigue risk departments that they are provided information to be able to recognise fatigue indicators in order to take appropriate action.

PCBUs are responsible for:

- Consult with SCHN Managers and workers regarding fatigue management planning & agree to implement controls.

Identifying Fatigue

The following sources of information may assist the supervisor/manager to identify whether work related fatigue has the potential to, or has already become a WHS issue:

- Observation of signs and symptoms of fatigue
- Consultation with worker/s
- Work Culture, i.e. if it is an accepted practice to work longer hours
- Shift arrangements, rosters and hours worked, including overtime
- WHS incident notifications/reports
- Investigation reports citing fatigue
- Workplace injury records
- Review Human Resources information, i.e. unplanned absenteeism, staff turnover
- Type of work(s) performed including safety critical tasks, e.g. workers are required to work across multiple locations, or where travelling may be involved as a major work component

Managing Work Related Fatigue

Managers should also ensure that exposure to the effects of fatigue are eliminated or minimised as far as reasonably practicable, and to promote a culture that minimises the effects of fatigue.

The risks associated with unmanaged work related fatigue include:

- Reduction in work performance
- Reduction in productivity

- Increased risks of work related WHS incidents and workers compensation claims
- Increased risk of possible adverse outcomes for patients

The consequences of these risks will vary, depending on the nature of work being done, the environment in which the work is being conducted, and non-work related variables.

Fatigue Assessment and Management form:

The Fatigue Assessment and Risk Management Plan can be found on the intranet under the WHS department and can be used to assist the supervisor/manager to manage risks associated with worker fatigue. <http://intranet.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/whs-management/fatigue>

Please note: NETS have separate risk assessment forms for their service available through the NETS Intranet.

Eliminating/Managing Risks Associated with Work Related Fatigue

The risks associated with fatigue can be managed by following a systematic process which involves:

- identifying the factors which may cause fatigue in the workplace
- if necessary, assessing the risks of injury from fatigue
- controlling risks by implementing the most effective control measures reasonably practicable in the circumstances, and
- reviewing control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

A range of management strategies and options exist that will assist in minimising the likelihood of work related fatigue occurring, and/or minimising the potential consequences of work related fatigue where it may be unavoidable.

While the actions taken will be specific to the individual circumstances and dependent on the issues identified suggested examples are provided below:

Shift and rostering design

- Using a forward shift rotation e.g. starting times moving from morning to afternoon to night time.
- Maximising breaks between shifts and before rotating staff to a new shift.
- Minimising the number of consecutive night shifts.
- Ensuring that periods of extended work hours are followed by an appropriate recovery time before resuming work.
- Ensuring rosters reflect an appropriate skills mix.
- Avoiding overtime allocation after afternoon or night shifts, especially after 10 or 12 hour night shifts.

- Ensuring staff establishments are sufficient to keep overtime to a minimum.
- Ensuring staff establishments are sufficient to carry out the work required.

Leave management

- Ensuring a process is in place for reducing/minimising excessive accumulation of annual leave entitlements.
- Ensuring the processes for managing and monitoring rosters and leave are linked.
- Ensuring all requests and approvals for leave or changes to rosters are in writing.
- Ensuring service delivery needs and the impact on staff are considered and managed when planning rosters and approving leave.
- Making alternative staff arrangements to cover a roster as and when required.
- Ensuring appropriate rest and nutrition breaks are provided in accordance to the relevant Award.

Work environment issues

- Ensuring workers have access to food outlets which offer nutritious food options & have ability to remain well hydrated.
- If applicable for the environment, provide rest accommodation or safe travel options after extra-long or extended shifts or long distance patient escorts.
- Ensuring sufficient time is allocated to allow safe travel between facilities.
- Minimise exposure to excessive heat, cold, vibration or noisy workplaces.

Staff support

- Ensuring all staff are aware of policies, procedures and expectations regarding rostering and leave.

Driver Fatigue

Staff should not be placed at unnecessary or unreasonable risk associated with driving and fatigue. While specific strategies to manage the risks associated with driver fatigue will depend on the individual circumstances, options can include:

- A greater use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing.
- Sharing vehicles so driving duties can be shared if required. Consideration of alternative methods of returning home.
- Utilise on call rooms for sleeping (where available).

Evaluation, Review and Improvement

Management should evaluate and review strategies relating to work related fatigue, identify areas for improvement, gaps in the administrative systems and the causes of any systems failures and enable the on-going improvement of control measures.

Reviews should be conducted regularly to set schedules and times to ensure that management strategies aimed at minimising and managing work related fatigue are actually achieving their goals.

Additional reviews may be required if certain circumstances, such as occurrence of fatigue-related incidents, near misses or risks arising from work related fatigue.

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