

# 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.
- Other staff should be aware of 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.

<b>Approved by:</b>	SCHN Policy, Procedure and Guideline Committee	
<b>Date Effective:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2016	<b>Review Period:</b> 3 years
<b>Team Leader:</b>	Work Health Safety Manager	<b>Area/Dept:</b> Work Health Safety

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Definitions</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Related Ministry of Health Documents</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>What is Fatigue?</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Work Related Fatigue.....	5
Non-work Related Fatigue.....	5
Workers are responsible to:.....	5
<b>Identifying Fatigue</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Managing Work Related Fatigue</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>Fatigue Assessment and Management form:</i> .....	6
<b>Eliminating/Managing Risks Associated with Work Related Fatigue</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Shift and rostering design.....	7
Leave management.....	7
Work environment issues .....	7
Staff support.....	7
<b>Driver Fatigue</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Evaluation, Review and Improvement</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## 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.

## Related Ministry of Health Documents

- PD2015\_049 [NSW Health Code of Conduct](#)
- PD2014\_029 [Leave Matters for the NSW Health System](#)
- PD2015\_026 [Recruitment and Selection of Staff of the NSW Health System](#)
- GL2007\_023 [Fatigue - Preventing & Managing Work Related Fatigue: Guidelines for the NSW Public Health System.](#)
- 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. (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.

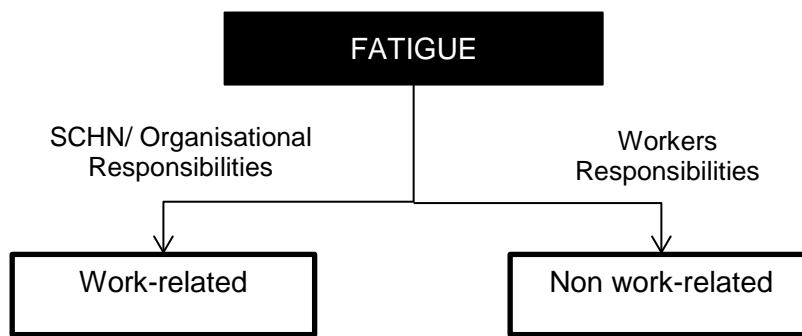
The following signs or symptoms may indicate a worker is fatigued:

- 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 and
- Inform the appropriate supervisor/manager where adequate sleep has not been obtained.

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.

## 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

## 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 staff have access to food outlets which offer nutritious food options
- 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

## 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 ensure that management strategies aimed at minimising and managing work related fatigue are actually achieving their goals.

### **Copyright notice and disclaimer:**

The use of this document outside Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN), or its reproduction in whole or in part, is subject to acknowledgement that it is the property of SCHN. SCHN has done everything practicable to make this document accurate, up-to-date and in accordance with accepted legislation and standards at the date of publication. SCHN is not responsible for consequences arising from the use of this document outside SCHN. A current version of this document is only available electronically from the Hospitals. If this document is printed, it is only valid to the date of printing.