

FACT SHEET

Managing fatigue in the workplace

The issue

Fatigue has been identified as a major contributing factor to numerous incidents in the mining industry. Shift work and the nature of the mining industry require workers to have irregular and often long hours in a high-risk working environment.

Fatigue can be defined as a state of impairment that can include physical and/or mental elements, including reduced alertness and performance. It is typically associated with inadequate sleep, extended time awake or time of day.

Your obligations

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has the primary duty of care to ensure, in so far as is reasonably practicable, workers and other people are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from the business or undertaking.

This duty includes eliminating the exposure to fatigue risks, for example, by appropriate rostering and maintaining a work environment that is designed to prevent fatigue. If it is not reasonably practicable to do so, then risks must be minimised, so far as is reasonably practicable, according to the hierarchy of controls.

The Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2014 requires a mine operator to manage risks and implement a range of control measures including:

- managing risks to health and safety associated with worker fatigue (clause 43)
- providing workers with suitable and adequate information, training and instruction about implementation of control measures in relation to fatigue (clause 104)
- consulting with workers about developing and implementing strategies to protect people from risks to health and safety arising from fatigue (clause 121)

Elimination and control

Mine operators should identify risk areas in relation to fatigue and select the most effective controls to eliminate or minimise those risks. More than one control measure may be required to reduce worker exposure to appropriate levels.

Control measures that will minimise the risks of fatigue include:

- ensuring work schedules enable sufficient sleep opportunities.
- monitoring to identify the onset of fatigue and worker impairment
- implementing work arrangements such as breaks or job rotation

Whatever strategy is adopted, it should be underpinned using the hierarchy of controls.

Targeted assessment program

Mine Safety's strategy is to ensure that workplaces with higher exposure to risks—for example, shifts of more than 12 hours or consecutive night shifts—are employing a range of measures to control them.

The management of fatigue at mines will be the subject of targeted assessments that will focus on how worker exposure to fatigue is prevented.

Key categories that will be assessed are:

- identification, assessment and risk controls for fatigue and associated risks
- preventative controls, that is, controlling the likelihood of fatigue developing
- mitigating controls, that is, controlling the effects of fatigue
- monitoring for worker exposure
- verifying the effectiveness of controls

For more information see Mine Safety's [Targeted assessment program fact sheet](#).

What should you do?

All mining sectors are encouraged to pre-emptively begin a review of their strategies and capacity to manage fatigue, as per the requirements under the legislation and according to good practice. Sites should ensure their approach to the management of this hazard is in line with the available guidance material and reflects accepted, effective control practice.

Seek assistance

A range of guidance is available to help operators and PCBUs meet their obligations to manage hazards and risks associated with worker exposure to fatigue.

Follow these links for more information:

- [Fatigue fact sheet](#) (NSW Department of Industry, Resources Regulator)
- [Guide to the development of a Fatigue Management Plan](#) (NSW Department of Industry, Resources Regulator)
- [Biomathematical Fatigue Models Guidance Document](#) (Civil Aviation Safety Authority)
- [Developing a Framework for a National Standard in fatigue risk management in the rail industry](#) (CRC for Rail Innovation)
- [Human factors: fatigue](#) (Health and Safety Executive, United Kingdom)
- [Guidance for managing shiftwork and fatigue offshore](#) (Health and Safety Executive, United Kingdom).

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