



AMWU OHS Contacts

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You could use this survey at your workplace as a way of starting the discussions about the health and safety effects of fatigue, working shifts and long hours.

1. Why do you work shift work?

- Job must be done at those hours
- Better pay
- Prefer working those hours
- More time off
- Other (please specify) _____

2. Do you have any input into your roster?

- Yes
- No

3. What shift do you normally work?

- day shift
- afternoon shift
- night shift
- rotating shifts

4. What is the normal length of your shift?

- 8 hr
- 10 hr
- 12 hr
- more than 14 hrs

5. How many total hours do you usually work each week? (averaged over 4 weeks)

- Less than 35
- 35 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 +

6. How many hours per week of paid overtime do you usually work?

- None - I don't usually work paid overtime
- Less 5 hours
- Between 5 and 10 hours
- More than 10 hours

7. How many hours per week of unpaid overtime do you usually?

- None - I don't usually work unpaid overtime
- Less than 5 hours
- Between 5 and 10 hours
- More than 10 hours

8. Do you often have less than 12 hours break between shifts?

- Yes
- No

9. Do you usually work more than 5 days in a row?

- No - I usually work less than 5 days in a row
- Between 5-7 days in a row
- Between 7-15 days in a row
- More than 15 days in a row

10. Has your health suffered because of your roster?

- Yes
- No

11. If yes, indicate if you have had any of the following symptoms:

- sleep difficulties
- continual tiredness
- feeling depressed
- indigestion
- high blood pressure
- panic/anxiety attacks
- menstrual problems
- frequent colds or respiratory illnesses

12. Does your family complain about your roster?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Frequently

13. Do you have sufficient access to the following facilities on your roster?

- Canteen and/or eating facilities
 - Yes
 - No
- First aid
 - Yes
 - No
- Training and information
 - Yes
 - No

14. Does training include information on the effects of shift work?

- Yes
- No



IT'S NO ACCIDENT

AMWU H&S NEWS

Made in Australia by AMWU labour

November 2010

Are you dragging your feet? fatigue, working shifts & long hours

The need for sleep is the body's second most powerful urge. The urge to breathe is the most powerful (luckily!). Fatigue is when our mental and/or physical performance is impaired or our alertness is lowered because of a lack of restorative sleep.

Work related fatigue can result from long daily hours of work, lack of rest days and shortened or poor quality sleep. Shiftwork can be a significant contributor to fatigue. Keeping busy or socially active may keep someone awake but it does not remove the fatigue. **Sleep is the only remedy for fatigue.**

Managing to get enough good quality sleep is often difficult, especially for night and Fly In Fly Out workers. Most night workers do not sleep before the first night shift and as our body is designed for night sleep, sleeping during the day is not very restful. This is because our body is designed for night sleep and disturbances such as noise and light are more common during the day.

Workers on 12 hour shifts and Fly In & Fly Out workers are often tempted to add extra shifts at the end and start of their rostered shifts. These practices greatly add to fatigue. The general principles about shifts (see next page) especially apply to these types of roster systems.

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BUSINESS

Open and place on noticeboard

Are you dragging your feet? fatigue, working shifts & long hours.

How much sleep do we need?

In general

- People should aim for between 7 & 8 hours sleep per night
- Less than six hours sleep over a few nights generally results in impairment
- More than 16 hours of being awake can result in impairment
- Loss of one nights sleep needs more that one nine hour sleep to recover
- The length of being awake in any 24 hours should not exceed the total amount of sleep in the last 48 hours.

The health and safety effects of fatigue and shiftwork:

- An increased likelihood of sleep disturbances: particularly for night workers and those starting before 6am. The impairment in alertness and performance after 17 hours of sustained wakefulness is similar to a blood alcohol level of 0.05%; 24 hours of wakefulness impairment is similar to 0.1%.
- An increased likelihood of accidents due to poor concentration, slower reaction times, impaired judgement of performance, increased lethargy etc.
- The risk of accidents
 - increases with the number of consecutive nights: compared with the first night shift, the risk of accident is increased by 36% on the fourth.
 - increases with the number of hours worked on a shift: the risk of accident in the 12th hour is nearly double that of the average risk over eight hours.

- increases across the shifts e.g. from morning to afternoon to night shift.
- Some studies show an increased risk of heart attacks e.g. working more than 60 hours, having less than 2 days off work per month or having less than five hours sleep on two or more days in a week.
- Other studies have shown that night workers are more likely than day workers to be exposed to working conditions linked with heart disease eg noise, heat, passive smoking, monotonous work and work where the worker has little say over how the work is done. Australian research has shown that men who work long hours are more likely to be smokers - a well known risk for heart disease.
- Studies have also shown a link between gastrointestinal disorders, poor mental health and increased risk of premature births in shift workers. Recently the International Agency on Cancer listed night work as possibly causing breast cancer.

The best shifts

When designing a shift roster the health and safety risks must be taken into account; just like with any other workplace hazard.

- Limit the number of consecutive evening or nights shifts to three (3): this improves sleep and reduces fatigue.
- **Avoid permanent night work** as our body clock never adjusts and day sleep is of both poorer quality and shorter duration
- Ensure at least two consecutive days off, twice a month
- Limit weekend work

- Limit the number of hours worked per shift.
Overtime on 12 hour shifts is dangerous Limit the number of consecutive 12 hour shifts
- Rotate in a forward direction: morning, afternoon, night
- Avoid starts before 6 am
- Ensure adequate breaks are taken during the shift eg two half hour breaks on 12 hour shifts
- **Remember: shiftwork and longer hours of work increase the risks from heat, manual handling, hazardous chemicals, noise etc.**
- **Remember: workers on shifts need representation: HSR & Delegates. Often it's out of sight out of mind for management: H&S risks often get ignored when they occur out of office hours.**

Shift arrangements need to allow time for sleep; the time taken to commute to and from work, limits the amount of sleep time available.

Importantly workers need to have a say about the design of the shift system. Workers having a say about the type of shifts, start times and days off, decreases fatigue and work absences, and improves productivity and work life balance.

Are hours of work, shifts or fatigue a problem at your workplace? One way to discover if there are problems at your workplace is a short survey. Ask the members what they think about fatigue and shifts. Shifts, fatigue and hours of work have industrial and health and safety implications. To find the best solutions HSRs and delegates need to work together.

For more information on shiftwork etc refer to AMWU 2010 Health and Safety booklet or www.amwu.org.au/campaigns/12/ohs

