



Fatigue Management

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1. PURPOSE

BCT recognises that fatigue affects a person's health and wellbeing, increases the chance of illness and workplace injuries occurring, and reduces performance and productivity within the workplace. The purpose of this policy is to highlight the effects and risks of employee fatigue, the shared responsibility to manage it appropriately, and the preventative actions that should be planned and taken to minimise associated risks.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all BCT employees, contractors and visitors whilst at the workplace or whilst carrying out activities on behalf of BCT, including workers at a higher risk factor.

These have been identified in a Fatigue Risk Assessment.

- Workers who undertake significant driving as part of their roles.
- Workers who undertake significant travel as part of their roles.
- Workers who carryout Field work in remote and isolated properties and or other sites, particularly remote sites requiring lengthy drives on country roads,
- Workers who work for long hours outdoors in extreme hot or cold temperatures,
- Workers working alone

3. DEFINITION

As this policy document will influence decision-making and provide the basis for related policies, strategies and actions, it is important that fatigue - as well as its symptoms, effects and remedies – be clearly defined.

3.1 IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL TIRED AFTER PROLONGED MENTAL OR PHYSICAL EFFORT AT WORK.

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.

It can occur because of prolonged mental or physical activity, sleep loss and/or disruption of the internal body clock.

Fatigue can be caused by factors which may be work related, non-work related or a combination of both and can accumulate over time.

Fatigue therefore is more than just feeling tired. Safe Work Australia defines fatigue as an acute and ongoing state of tiredness that leads to mental and/or physical exhaustion and prevents people from functioning within normal boundaries.

3.2 FATIGUE CAN ACCUMULATE OVER TIME

Fatigue can accumulate over time, and may be caused by:

- some work-related factors such as; length of time worked, inadequate rest breaks and/or sleep, working in remote and isolated areas, harsh environmental conditions.
- lifestyle factors such as; poor quality of sleep, family responsibilities, social life, commuting time to and from work
- or a combination of both.

3.3 SIGNS OF FATIGUE

Signs of fatigue may include:

- headaches and/or dizziness
- difficulty keeping eyes open
- constant yawning
- muscle weakness
- lacking energy

3.4 IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF FATIGUE

The immediate effects of fatigue may include:

- lack of concentration
- reduced short-term memory
- increased errors
- slower reaction times
- impaired decision-making and judgment (including being unaware of the state of fatigue)
- reduced immune system function

3.5 LONGER-TERM EFFECTS OF FATIGUE

The long-term effects of fatigue may include:

- high blood pressure and/or heart disease
- depression and/or anxiety
- diabetes and/or gastro-intestinal disorders

3.6 FATIGUE HAS A SIMILAR EFFECT TO ALCOHOL

Studies show that 17 hours awake has a similar effect on the body as blood alcohol content of .05%, and 24 hours awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 1%.

3.7 SLEEP IS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND MANAGE FATIGUE

While tired muscles can recover with rest, the brain can recover only with sleep. An adult generally requires seven to eight hours of sleep daily, taken in a single continuous period. When individuals get less sleep than they need in a day, they build up a sleep debt. Each additional day without enough sleep increases the debt which, when it becomes large enough, causes fatigue. The only way to reduce or cancel a sleep debt is by sleeping additional hours.

4. POLICY

BCT is committed to achieving a high standard of fatigue awareness and management at all workplaces and sites. This policy is deliberately broad and outlines the minimum standards acceptable for a safe working environment.

4.1 A RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO FATIGUE

Fatigue needs to be managed, like any other hazard.

Risk management, in the context of work activity safety, is the process of identifying hazards, assessing the likelihood and consequences of the risks of injury or illness occurring, and eliminating risks (where reasonably practicable), or implementing control measures to appropriately manage the risks. Like any other hazard in the workplace, when fatigue may affect a person's ability to work safely, it must be identified, assessed and controlled.

BCT supports the following risk management approach to fatigue which should be undertaken in consultation with workers and workplace health and safety representatives. Refer to the BCT Risk Management Policy & Procedure for more detailed risk management techniques and requirements.

4.1.1 IDENTIFY POSSIBLE CAUSES OF FATIGUE, BEARING IN MIND THAT FACTORS CAN BE INTERRELATED:

- long hours at work
- concentrating for long periods of time without breaks
- a lot of travelling or driving
- Extensive driving on country unsealed roads
- 4WD on properties on rough terrain
- Working in alone in remote and isolated areas
- Working in extreme outdoor weather conditions
- Extreme deadlines to be completed in set time frame
- possible personal issues e.g. family responsibilities or health problems.

This can be done by consulting with employees, analysing work hours and comparing planned with actual hours, reviewing workplace incident data, and checking whether employees have had accidents travelling on home or work related trips.

4.1.2 ASSESS THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH FATIGUE:

- use the risk matrix to determine the consequence x likelihood = risk score
- the risk score will aid in determining priorities

4.1.3 IMPLEMENT CONTROL MEASURES

Implement Control measures that focus on the actual causes rather than symptoms, and aim to eliminate or minimise the factors that cause fatigue at the source. Use the Hierarchy of Control to determine the most practicable controls with the most reduced risk. Some of these control measures will be systemic and relevant to all BCT workplaces and sites; others will be appropriate for a specific site, examples of controls to be implement:

- ensure workplaces are well-lit and ventilated
- ensure employees take adequate breaks
- provide information and training on fatigue management
- encourage employees to report any concerns they may have about work-related fatigue
- avoid work arrangements that provide incentives to work excessive hours
- ensure clear work processes and effective planning eg plans to deal with workload changes due to absenteeism, staff on leave or seasonal work pressures
- consider alternate options to travelling to face-to-face meetings eg tele/video-conferencing (Skype)
- Ensure that the BCT Driving Guidelines are follow by all staff.
- Ensure staff follows the BCT Working in Outdoor Extreme Temperatures guidelines
- And follow the BCT Working in the Field and Working Alone and Isolated policy and procedures
- set up processes that enable the review of incidents, near misses, illnesses and other data such as absenteeism and staff turnover rates to see if they could be attributed to fatigue
- encourage employees/immediate families to use free Employee Assistance Program to talk with qualified counsellors about work and personal issues

4.2 RECOMMENDED WORKING HOURS AND BREAKS

There needs to be a flexible risk management approach, rather than a prescriptive approach, to managing fatigue as each person's health, lifestyle, job role and approach to work is different, and will change over time.

BCTs Staff Agreement defines "ordinary hours" as being 38 hours/week between 7am and 7pm, and all BCT staff are aware that overtime must be approved in advance, however there will also be times when staff need to work longer hours than usual to meet a project deadline, drive long distances to complete assignments, or take flights to meetings.

For these circumstances, the following parameters are offered as a guide to help minimise the risk of fatigue related injuries and illnesses.

For these circumstances, the following parameters are offered as a guide to help minimise the risk of fatigue related injuries and illnesses.

- 4.2.1 Each employee is responsible for taking adequate meal breaks and tea breaks. These are not considered a luxury, or even optional; it is important to stretch, rest the eyes, get some fresh air and something healthy to eat.
- 4.2.2 There should be a minimum of 12 hours between the end of one day's work and the start of the next. This is important to allow enough time for a balanced life and to ensure adequate sleep.
- 4.2.3 All employees should have two full days off after working >38hrs. Again, this is important to allow enough time for a balanced life and to ensure adequate sleep.
- 4.2.4 As a guide, an employee's daily work hours should not exceed 10 hours/day and 50 hours/week. This equates to an average of 200 hours/month and 600 hours over three months. Although working on weekends is sometimes necessary, it should not be ongoing. Fatigue causes an increased risk of injury and/or illness to the affected employee and to others in the workplace. In these cases, staff should speak with their supervisors/managers about other options for handling the workload.
- 4.2.5 If a position requires a significant amount of travel, often outside of the 7am to 7pm timeframe, employees should discuss the issue with their supervisors/managers who may be able to arrange alternate solutions – eg time off in lieu, or approval for accommodation or flights.

4.3 LONG-DISTANCE DRIVING

Long-distance driving has been identified as one of BCT's higher risk activities.

All BCT worker are expected to work strictly within the BCT Driving Guidelines.

The dangers of driving whilst tired are well-documented and promoted in the media, as are the risks inherent in driving long distances. Work Safe Australia advises that any single journey of more than 500kms significantly increases the risk of fatigue-related incidents.

The following points are offered as a guide to help minimise the risk of fatigue-related car accidents and injuries whilst driving long distances:

- Have a good night's sleep before driving, so you can start fresh.
- Where possible, start your trip early in the day. It is particularly important to avoid driving during times you would usually be asleep.
- Shift the air control level to "fresh air" rather than "recycle", or the air will get stuffy. Opening a window will also help.
- Plan a 10-minute break or rest stop every two hours; get out of the car and stretch.
- Watch for signs of fatigue. Drinking coffee, talking, listening to the radio or opening the window may help in the short-term but if you're tired, only sleep can improve your concentration.
- Remember: Fatigue affects a person's health and wellbeing; increases the chance of illness, workplace injuries and car accidents occurring; and reduces performance and productivity within the workplace. Managing these risks is a shared responsibility.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 Workplace Health and Safety laws are designed to ensure the health and safety of everyone at the workplace.
- 5.2 BCT has a duty to provide a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of workers. This includes ensuring that managers, supervisors and staff in general are well-informed about the risks associated with fatigue, and aware of effective and prompt actions to minimise those risks in the immediate and longer-term.
- 5.3 Each supervisor and manager also has a duty to be observant and protect the safety and wellbeing of all staff, particularly new employees.
- Understand how fatigue can be managed and how to implement control measures, including how to design suitable work schedules in consultation with workers
 - take appropriate action when a worker is displaying fatigue related impairment.
- 5.4 Each employee has a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of others in the workplace. This includes the obligation to turn up for work in a state that enables them to conduct their business activities in a safe manner. Each employee also has a duty to follow policies and procedures, and cooperate fully with actions BCT takes to comply with Workplace Health and Safety laws.

6. RELEVANT LEGISLATION & INFORMATION

BCT's Fatigue Management Policy complies with all relevant State and Federal Acts and associated Regulations.

BCT also acknowledges the following resources which have helped develop this policy:

- Safe Work Australia Fatigue Management : www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/fatigue
- Fatigue in the Workplace Check List DOC18/676340

7. BREACH OF POLICY

A breach of this policy may have unintended and harmful consequences. Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken, including dismissal in serious cases.

8. DOCUMENT APPROVAL AND REVISION

Date	Version	Status	Comment

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