

 **Fatigue**



An introduction
to SafetreeTM

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Fatigue

Fatigue can cause a loss of alertness and concentration, which can have serious or even fatal consequences. If a forestry worker becomes less alert through fatigue, their judgement and ability to do their tasks safely decreases.

Recognising fatigue

It's normal for forestry workers to feel tired. But if they don't get enough recovery time between shifts and/or don't allow themselves enough time to recover when off-shift, tiredness can become fatigue. That increases the chances of them making a mistake and being injured or injuring others.

Common indicators of fatigue:

- ▶ Feeling tired or sleepy, or not feeling refreshed after sleep
- ▶ Tripping or stumbling more than usual
- ▶ Blurred vision
- ▶ Feeling grumpy or getting annoyed easily
- ▶ Frequent blinking, finding it difficult to keep eyes open
- ▶ Yawning
- ▶ Taking more naps during breaks, or falling asleep at work
- ▶ Finding it hard to concentrate and/or making mistakes.

If a worker is showing any of these signs, they have a significantly increased chance of not identifying a hazard, and then suffering or causing an injury.

Fatigue is a hazard

Working while fatigued can be just as dangerous as working after drinking alcohol or taking drugs. The employer has a duty to manage fatigue just as they do any other workplace hazard.

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Fatigue can be caused by:

Work factors – long hours, not enough time between shifts, long drives to the site.

Non-work factors – a young family, disrupted sleep, too much fun and not enough rest can also contribute to fatigue if workers don't recover when off-shift.

Measures to control risk factors at work:

- ▶ Drink enough water to keep hydrated, especially if it's hot – sip around half a litre of fluid an hour
- ▶ Eat the right foods in the right amounts to give you sustained energy, rather than high-sugar foods that cause energy highs and lows
- ▶ Ideally take two half-hour breaks (rather than a single one-hour break) and frequent brief rests
- ▶ Rotate and share out the harder, most repetitive or boring tasks
- ▶ Wear the right gear for the job, such as footwear with good grip and clothes that draw sweat away from the skin so it evaporates, rather than cotton, which can become sweat-logged and heavy
- ▶ Have enough crew on to cover the workload
- ▶ Have enough time in between shifts to recover, especially if working overtime
- ▶ Take a brief early break before the morning break if there's been an early start with a long drive to the worksite.

Get enough sleep

Fatigue isn't something you can just "push through". The only cure for fatigue is sleep, preferably about seven or eight hours a night. Forestry's early starts can mean it's hard to get enough sleep, and the resulting fatigue can put you and your crew mates at risk of injury – or worse.