

Managing fatigue in the workplace

Fatigue is a major contributing factor to many 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 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

The Resources Regulator'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.

Managing 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 the Regulator's [Targeted assessment program fact sheet](#).

What should you do?

All mining sectors are encouraged to review 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.

More information

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:

- [Guide to developing and implementing a Fatigue Management Plan](#) (NSW 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)
- [Fatigue](#) (SafeWork Australia)

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Planning and Environment 2017. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the NSW Department of Planning and Environment as the owner. Disclaimer: This publication provides a general summary of some of the provisions under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017* and the *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2014* (WHS laws) as interpreted by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment at the time of writing (July 2017). Compliance with the WHS laws is a legal requirement. This publication does not provide or purport to provide legal advice. Users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date by checking the currency of the information at the Department's website or with the user's independent legal advisor. **PUB17/10**