

ESSENTIAL  
STANDARD  
no.25

# Tiredness and Fatigue



# KEY MESSAGES

- Consider fatigue when planning work and shift patterns.
- Complete a risk assessment to review the effects of fatigue on work activities.
- Plan work so that no one is scheduled to work more than 12 hours (excluding handover time). If someone is to work longer than 12 hours, a discussion is needed with their manager and an assessment is to be conducted.
- Stand down anyone who shows signs of fatigue.
- Empower employees to stop work if they become tired and fatigued.
- TW has introduced a maximum of 16hrs work in any 24hr period for their employees, our supply chain partners should consider their approach to this.



## 1. Introduction

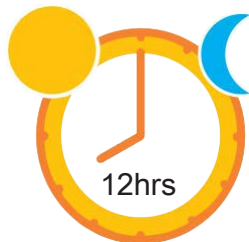
This seeks to guide managers, supervisors and those planning and scheduling work activities, as well as those who carry out the work, on how to limit the impact of fatigue.

## 2. Definition

Generally speaking, fatigue means “a state of perceived weariness that can result from prolonged working, heavy workload, insufficient rest and inadequate sleep”. It can result in **tiredness** and a **reduced ability** to perform work effectively.

### 2.1. Research:

**Long shifts** influence fatigue and have been linked with an increase in risk of incidents. To help reduce this, limit the duration of a shift to **12 hours** (excluding shift handover time).



### 2.2. Impact:

A fatigued person will be:

- less alert
- less able to process information
- take longer to react and make decisions
- less interested in working



### 2.3. Personal Risk:

Fatigued staff may not adequately perceive risk and accept **lower standards** of performance and safety.



### 2.4. Detection:

Fatigue is a particular concern in safety critical work as there's no scientific test for fatigue, making it **hard to detect**.



## 3. Risk Assessment

Line managers and supervisors must consider the following factors during the assessment, planning and scheduling of activities:

### 3.1. Work demands:

The hours that an individual works and the demands within those hours can lead to fatigue, but can also affect people in different ways. Some pressure can act as a motivator; however, excessive pressure can lead to **physical and mental harm**.

In order to reduce the risk of fatigue, consider the following when developing a risk assessment:



Where possible, introduce a **variety of tasks** to minimise physical and mental demands and assist in maintaining alertness during a shift.



Use **plant, machinery and equipment** (such as lifting equipment) to eliminate or reduce excessive physical demands.



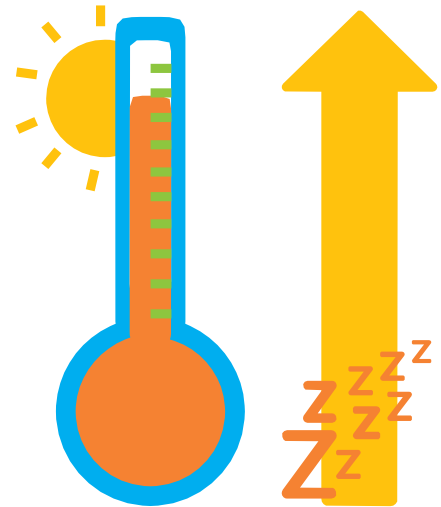
Encourage people to rest if feeling tired in addition to scheduled meal breaks

### 3.2. Work environment:

The work environment can influence the likelihood of fatigue on a daily basis. For example, a person working outdoors is more likely to become fatigued in hot weather, even though they may be doing a familiar task.

In order to reduce the risk of fatigue, consider the following when developing a risk assessment, where possible:

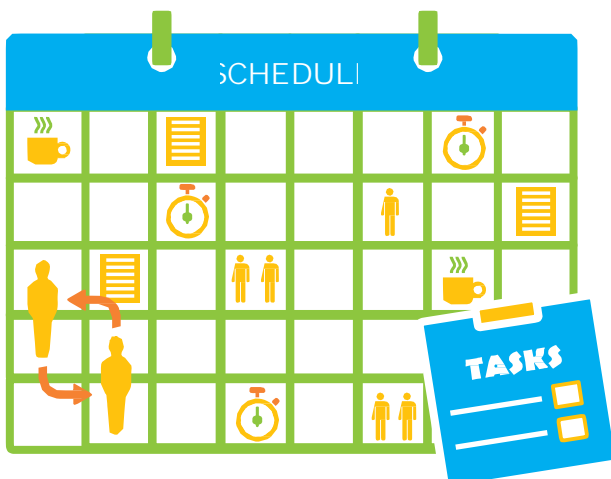
- Avoid physically demanding work during extreme temperatures or increase the **frequency of breaks**.
- Use **heating/cooling devices** in extreme temperatures and/or provide appropriate work clothing and shelter.
- Install **ventilation/cooling devices** in hot, confined work environments such as vehicle cabins.
- Enable employees to use available **facilities** for rest, meal breaks, bathroom facilities, etc.
- Provide **accommodation** that is conducive to restorative sleep (quiet, dark, and cool) when workers need to work away from home – no overnight sleeping in vans, etc.
- **Monitor** and control **exposure** to noise, temperature and chemicals.
- Provide **personal protective equipment** and ensure correct use.
- **Rotate** workers through different tasks to reduce the effects of environmental factors on fatigue.



### 3.3. Work scheduling/planning:

The risk from fatigue can be minimised through thorough scheduling and planning.

In order to reduce the risk of fatigue, consider the following when developing a risk assessment where possible:

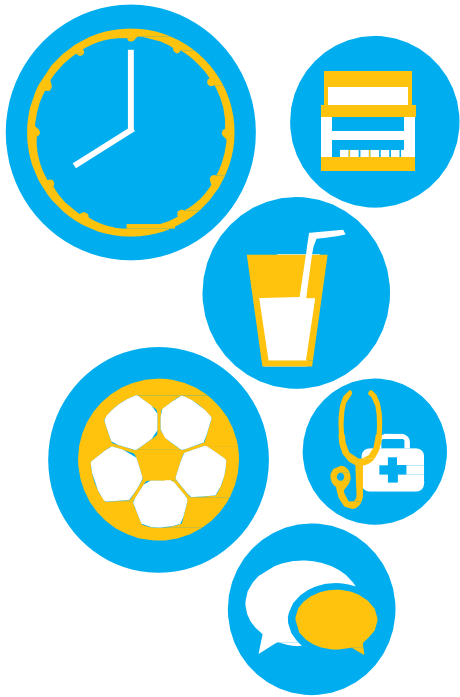


- **Manage deadlines** to ensure there is no rush towards the end of a programme and there are no incentives to finish a task more quickly than safely.
- Include adequate **breaks** during a work schedule, especially during a night shift.
- Ensure workers are not placed under excessive demands.
- Fill vacant positions as quickly as possible to ensure there are **enough workers** to complete work schedules.
- Plan work tasks so that work demands **decrease** towards the end of the shift.
- Review **supply chain working practices** to ensure double shifting (moonlighting) is not taking place.

### 3.4. Non-work factors:

Fatigue can be caused by external influences outside the control of the workplace.

**Assist and support workers by considering the following:**



- Brief workers on **fatigue risk factors** and their responsibility to manage their sports and social commitments to ensure they are fit-for-duty.
- Check workers are **fit-for-work** and encourage them to self-identify where appropriate.
- Following up when a worker **self-identifies** difficulties she/he may have with such issues as rostering arrangements, health conditions, and family/carer responsibilities.
- Assess applications for **secondary employment** and approve applications only if there is no increased risk of fatigue.
- Encourage workers to seek **medical advice** to manage both temporary illnesses and chronic health conditions which may cause fatigue.
- **Monitor leave** to ensure workers do not accrue excess annual leave.
- **Monitor sick leave** to make sure that workers affected by fatigue are identified and managed appropriately.
- Refer fatigued workers as a result of personal issues or medical conditions (e.g. sleep apnea) to the organisation's **occupational health team**.

### 3.5. Rest periods:

In order to work safely it is important that all personnel get sufficient rest.

**Workers over 18 are usually entitled to three types of rest breaks:**

#### • Rest breaks at work:



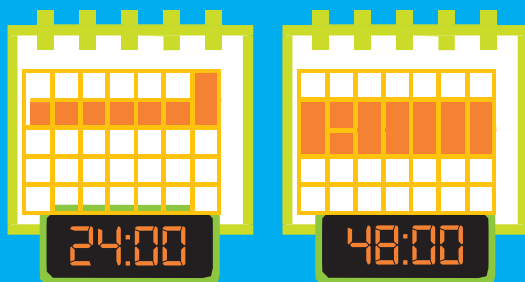
If workers work for more than 6 hours a day, they must get at least one 20-minute uninterrupted rest break (tea/lunch).

#### • Daily rest:



Workers should have 11 hours rest between normal working days/shifts (e.g. finish work at 20.00 and don't start work before 07.00 the next day). For call out/standby do not work more than 12 hours in a 24 hour period without having a discussion about it with your manager.

#### • Weekly rest:



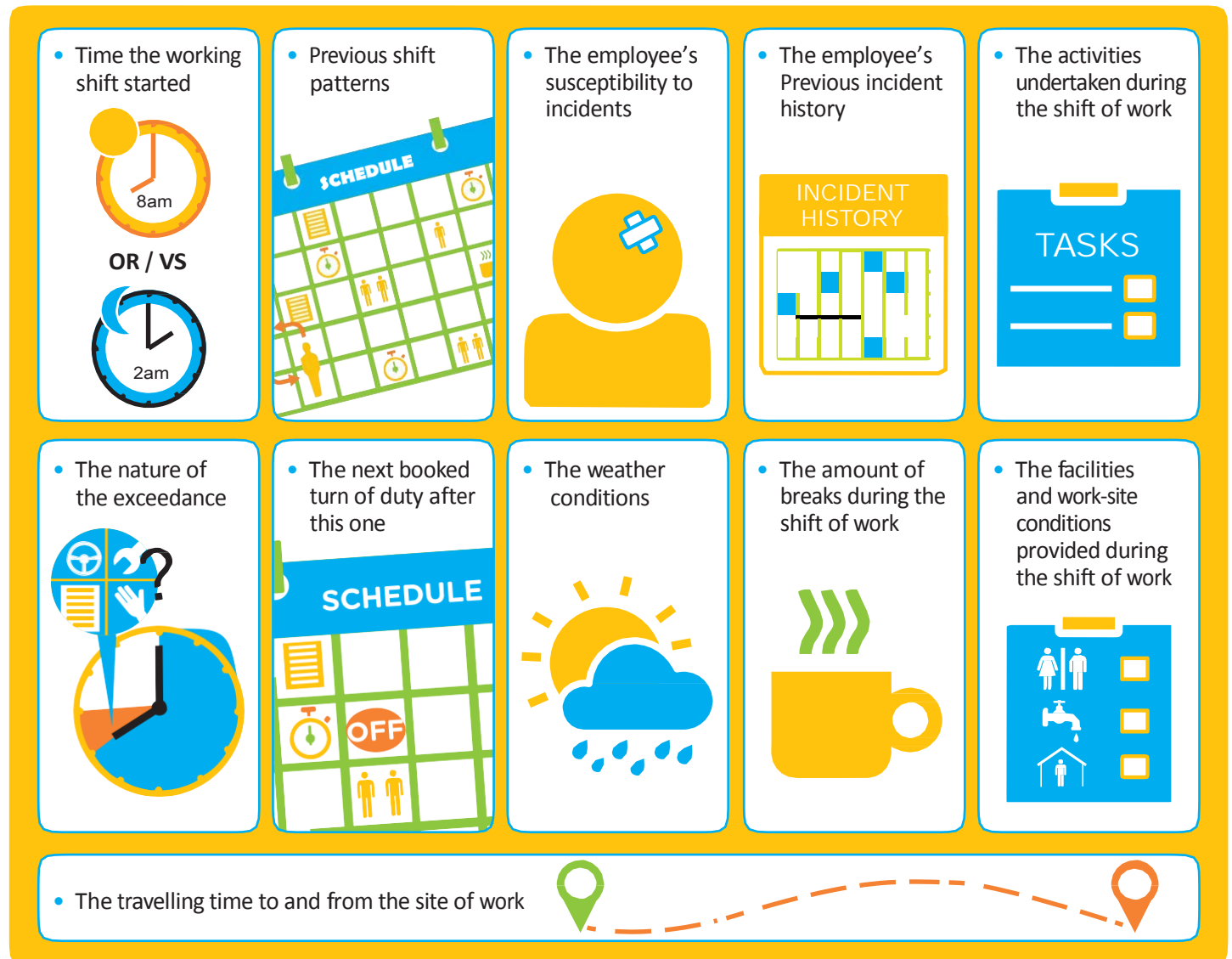
Workers should have an uninterrupted 24 hours without any work each week or 48 hours each fortnight.

## 4. Hours Worked

Record all **employees' hours of work** so you can understand the short and long periods of work any individual is undertaking and take action.

Plan work so that no one is **scheduled** to work more than **12 hours** (excluding handover time and travel time). Where an employee will exceed 12 hours of work, the Line Manager must carry out an **assessment** and discuss whether it will be safe to extend their working hours with the employees.

**Consider the following when extending working hours:**



**Where work duration exceedances continue to occur**, individuals should be stood down as soon as is reasonably practical and a sufficient rest break allowed.

## 5. Thames Water - 16 Hours Maximum

Thames Water has introduced a maximum 16hr working period in any 24hrs - this is inclusive of any return commute to their home location.

- Employees must ensure that they notify their OOH / supervisor when they meet their 12-hr working period, so that steps can be taken to either safely halt the work activity or to ensure close monitoring of the work whilst alternative resource is arranged to allow the employee to return home within the 16hr period.
- OOH / Duty Managers are responsible for completing a risk assessment at 12hr & 14hr points to mitigate the risk of excessive fatigue on employees post the 12-hr working period. They must immediately escalate any concerns to the respective senior manager (ML4 or above) where there is any likelihood that an employee could exceed the 16-hr max working limit.
- The TW senior manager (ML4 or above) is responsible for taking action to prevent the employee(s) working beyond the 16hr max limit, including any driving activity they may undertake to home location / alternative accommodation. Their actions may include making safe / halting work activities whilst replacement personnel are made available.