

Managing Fatigue during Operational Activity

It is important to take reasonable care of your health and safety at work and not adversely affect the health and safety of others.

Therefore it is important that members follow reasonable instructions and procedures relating to fatigue, particularly when volunteers are performing their normal job, along with SES duties which can be often seen as a second job.

Fatigue can affect performance at work and can be likened to how alcohol affects your performance. SafeWork NSW say if you are awake for 17 hours, your performance would be impaired at the same level as having a 0.05 blood alcohol content.

This could lead to reduced productivity and an increase in near misses, incidents and injuries, even if the signs of fatigue may not be obvious.

Risks and signs associated with fatigue include:

- Short term memory problems and an inability to concentrate
- Slower response and reaction times
- Impaired judgement and decision-making ability
- Blurred vision, possibly sore, red, or watering eyes
- Tiredness even after sleep
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Repeated mistakes at work

Health Affects - There are long-term health effects of being fatigued which can include high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and depression.

It's important to understand the activities and demands of the work environment that cause fatigue, so these risks can be managed to minimise the effect.

Work schedules:

- Operational shifts are generally 12 hours
- Rostering to allow sufficient recovery between work days / shift, excessive hours,
- Start / Finish times to allow for appropriate rest between shifts
- Ensure adequate rest breaks are taken
- Consistency of shift patterns to allow members to manage their fatigue levels accordingly

Environmental conditions:

- Avoid working during extreme temperatures where possible.
- Ensure appropriate ventilation and cooling devices are provided in hot work environments
- Maintain appropriate personal protective clothing / equipment (PPC/PPE)

Non work related factors

- Implement a system that allows Unit Commanders/Managers to assess fitness for work before and after a shift
- IMSAFER methodology based on outside factors such as substantive employer hours
- Consideration for travel time between the incident scene and home / accommodation, particularly if in remote areas

Control Measures:

- IMSAFER methodology must be used to allow members to assess their fitness for work each day
- Allow for a minimum of 8 hours sleep
- Consider the length of time a member has been awake and what activities or work the member has already undertaken prior to commencing a shift and determine the maximum length of shift they should be undertaking for SES
- Time to provide handovers and briefings
- Nutrition to ensure members are being provided with a balanced diet to feed their brain and bodies during operational periods.
- Factor in time shifts commence depending on environmental conditions where possible, ie summertime may start early and finish early or later in afternoon and work into night to avoid heat exhaustion
- Factor in transport arrangements / travel times if they are excessive to reduce the risk of further fatigue
- Implement recommended shift as per WHS Operational Fatigue Management Procedure
- Ensure your teams and colleagues are taking breaks or doing regular stretching
- Look out for signs of fatigue in other members to ensure their welfare and safety

Your responsibilities as a worker/volunteer to reduce the risk of fatigue:

- Comply with policy and procedures relating to fatigue
- It's important to get adequate, regular and consistent amounts of sleep away from SES activity
- Assess your own fitness prior to commencing work with SES, using IMSAFER and monitor your level of alertness whilst you are doing activities
- Talk to your Unit Commanders/Team Leaders to take steps to manage fatigue, rest break, hydration, stretching, adjust work environment (temperature based)
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a reasonable work and personal schedule
- Seek medical advice or assistance if you have any concerns about a health condition that affects your sleep and/or causes fatigue
- Avoid alcohol, nicotine, and drug use

Supporting Documentation:

WHS Operational Fatigue Management Procedure

IMSAFER2.pdf

Peer Support Procedure

Employee Assistance Program Procedure

Chaplaincy Program Procedure

SafeWork NSW - <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/fatigue>

SafeWork Australia -

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/fatigue-management-a-workers-guide.pdf>

If you do suspect there is an issue with regards to fatigue or management of fatigue, report it as soon as immediately. Report all injuries, hazards, and near-hits on **1800**

737 647

IMSAFER

Should I respond to an incident?

I	Illness or Injury	Am I sufficiently recovered?
M	Medication	Am I under the effect of any medication?
S	Stress	Am I under severe stress from personal or work worries?
A	Alcohol	Am I under the influence or hung over?
F	Fatigue	Am I tired or not adequately rested?
E	Expertise	Am I currently competent?
R	Review	Have I recently reviewed my ongoing suitability for the task?