

Welcome to another edition of 'Astute Safety Thinking' In this month's edition:

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- Building firm fined for multiple failings that included worker being lifted by raised bucket.
- Food waste Action week 6th March to 12th March 2023
- Mothering Sunday 19 March 2023.



## The importance of sleep

### Why sleep is important?

Getting enough good quality sleep plays an essential role in your health and wellbeing throughout your life.

### Key points about sleep

1. When you sleep, important physical and mental processes are carried out.
2. Regular, good quality sleep is important for brain functioning, emotional wellbeing, physical health, daytime performance and personal safety.
3. Adults need at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night to be well rested.
4. Not getting enough sleep is common and can have serious impacts on your health and wellbeing.
5. If you build up a sleep debt, you need at least 2 nights in a row of unrestricted good quality sleep to restore your balance.

### How much sleep is enough?

How much sleep you need changes during your lifetime, with babies needing a lot more than adults. Teenagers need lots of sleep, women's sleep patterns change throughout their lives and older adults sleep less soundly. Sleep needs also vary between people.

### What happens if you do not get enough sleep?

If you regularly are not getting enough sleep, your sleep loss adds up. The total sleep lost is called your sleep debt. For example, if you lose 2 hours of sleep each night, you will have a sleep debt of 14 hours after a week.

The harm caused by not getting enough sleep can be immediate, such as in having an accident due to not being able to focus and respond quickly. Other effects can take years to develop, such as an increased risk of developing a chronic health problem.

### Lack of good sleep can lead to:

- excessive daytime sleepiness, tiredness, and lethargy
- morning headaches
- poor memory and difficulty focusing
- anxiety and depression
- chronic health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
- an increased risk of alcohol and drug dependence
- having a car accident
- making mistakes at work, including causing accidents
- relationship problems
- lack of sex drive.

In young people, lack of quality sleep may have a direct effect on their health, development, behaviour, and ability to socialise and have a good relationship with their peers.



## How to counter sleep debt

Getting enough sleep can be likened to banking your savings. If you take sleep out of your account, you have to put it back in to restore the balance – there's no other way to catch up. To restore your sleep balance, you need at least 2 nights in a row of unrestricted good quality sleep.



## Shift work and fatigue

Irregular hours of work and work patterns that include night and early morning shifts can lead to disruption of the internal body clock, sleeping difficulties and fatigue.

If workers are fatigued, they will be less alert, their reaction time will be slower, they will find it harder to concentrate and they may make poor decisions. This can lead to accidents and injuries.

### What do I have to do?

If you operate a shift work system or your employees are required to work irregular hours, you should assess any risks that arise from their working pattern and take action to tackle any problems you identify.

Factors to consider during risk assessment are:

- the workload
- the work activity
- shift timing and duration.
- direction of shift rotation. It is better for the shifts to run in a 'forward rotation', i.e., morning/afternoon/night.
- the number and length of breaks within a shift
- rest periods between shifts



## Why is fatigue important?

More than 3.5 million people are employed as shift workers in the UK. They work in a wide variety of industries including the emergency services, healthcare, the utilities, transport, manufacturing (including oil, gas & chemical industries), entertainment and retail. Poorly designed shift-working arrangements and long working hours that do not balance the demands of work with time for rest and recovery can result in fatigue, accidents, injuries, and ill health.

Fatigue refers to the issues that arise from excessive working time or poorly designed shift patterns. It is generally considered to be a decline in mental and/or physical performance that results from prolonged exertion, sleep loss and/or disruption of the internal clock. It is also related to workload, in that workers are more easily fatigued if their work is machine-paced, complex or monotonous.

Fatigue results in slower reactions, reduced ability to process information, memory lapses, absent-mindedness, decreased awareness, lack of attention, underestimation of risk, reduced coordination etc. Fatigue can lead to errors and accidents, ill-health and injury, and reduced productivity. It is often a root cause of major accidents e.g. Herald of Free Enterprise, Chernobyl, Texas City, Clapham Junction, Challenger and Exxon Valdez.

Fatigue has also been implicated in 20% of accidents on major roads and is said to cost the UK £115 - £240 million per year in terms of work accidents alone.

# Shift work and fatigue continued



## Key principles in fatigue

- Fatigue needs to be managed, like any other hazard.
- It is important not to underestimate the risks of fatigue. For example, the incidence of accidents and injuries has been found to be higher on night shifts, after a succession of shifts, when shifts are long and when there are inadequate breaks.
- The legal duty is on employers to manage risks from fatigue, irrespective of any individual's willingness to work extra hours or preference for certain shift patterns for social reasons. Compliance with the Working Time Regulations alone is insufficient to manage the risks of fatigue.
- Changes to working hours need to be risk assessed. The key considerations should be the principles contained in HSE's guidance. Risk assessment may include the use of tools such as HSE's 'fatigue risk index'.
- Employees should be consulted on working hours and shift patterns. However, note that employees may prefer certain shift patterns that are unhealthy and likely to cause fatigue.
- Develop a policy that specifically addresses and sets limits on working hours, overtime and shift-swapping, and which guards against fatigue.
- Implement the policy and make arrangements to monitor and enforce it. This may include developing a robust system of recording working hours, overtime, shift-swapping and on-call working.
- Problems with overtime and shift-swapping may indicate inadequate resource allocation and staffing levels.
- There are many different shift work-schedules, and each schedule has different features. This sheer diversity of work and workplaces means that there is no single optimal shift system that suits everyone. However, a planned and systematic approach to assessing and managing the risks of shift work can improve the health and safety of workers.
- There are a number of key risk factors in shift schedule design, which must be considered when assessing and managing the risks of shift work. These are the workload, the work activity, shift timing and duration, direction of rotation and the number and length of breaks during and between shifts. Other features of the workplace environment such as the physical environment, management issues and employee welfare can also contribute to the risks associated with shift work.
- Sleep disturbances can lead to a 'sleep debt' and fatigue. Night workers are particularly at risk of fatigue because their day sleep is often lighter, shorter, and more easily disturbed because of daytime noise and a natural reluctance to sleep during daylight.

## Mechanics warned of the Life threatening dangers if working under vehicles

- Twenty-one workers in motor vehicle repair industry killed in last five years, HSE figures show.
- More than half of these deaths (13) were caused when work took place under a vehicle that wasn't properly supported.
- Mechanics urged to challenge "this will only take me a minute" culture.
- Classic Motor Cars Ltd supports HSE's call for better safety with motor vehicles.

Leading voices in motor vehicle repair have teamed up with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to warn of the dangers of working under vehicles without proper equipment.

Figures recorded by HSE in the five years up to March 2022 show that 13 workers in the motor vehicle repair industry were killed when work took place under a vehicle that wasn't properly supported. Since April 2022, HSE has become aware of another four cases of workers being crushed to death by an incorrectly supported vehicle.

More information about this could be found on the HSE website [here](#).

## Why Astute Safety Consulting?



As stress can result in a poor night's sleep, we offer an accredited course on Stress Management.

Stress is a real problem for both organisations and their employees. It accounts for a significant proportion of work related illness each year. Being aware of the signs of stress, some of the triggers and how to manage them can make a real difference to your wellbeing and that of people around you. This course will cover an introduction to stress and why it's a problem, some of the causes of stress and some ways to minimise the risk of stress.

We've teamed up with Video Tile Learning to offer you the latest online learning resources, designed to improve you and your team's safety awareness and knowledge. You choose the subjects and learn at your own pace. To access your online training experience, click on the link below.

- Comprehensive training library
- Accredited courses
- Informative training videos
- Learn at your own pace.
- Affordable training, discount available

Approved by CPD & IIRSM

CPD Units: 2

30 mins\*

## Why Astute Safety Consulting?



You need a team that can work with you to ensure that you comply with Safety Regulation. Let us take care of your safety needs and lead and produce you:

- Risk assessments
- Safe methods of work
- Safety procedures
- Manual handling Assessments
- Safety Notices
- Workplace Assessments
- Safety Audits
- Accident Investigations
- Safety Management Systems

### Safety Systems

Our team has the expertise to write your safety management systems or safety case to fit your business needs. The complexity of this will be tailored to your business, ensuring that you are not swamped with documents that are difficult to understand and follow.



## Company fined after worker breaks rib falling into pit.

A company has been fined after a worker fell into a moulding pit and suffered a broken rib. The Peel Jones Copper Products Limited employee had opened up the company's site at Maynard Foundry, Kilton Lane, Saltburn on 27 August 2021. The lights inside the company's casting room were currently off and the worker had to walk from one side to the other in order to turn them on. While doing this, the worker lost their bearings and fell into one of the company's pits, suffering a broken rib.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company had not properly assessed the risk created by the pits, and that suitable edge protection or covers for the pits had not been provided.

HSE inspector Stephen Garner said: "The company failed to take suitable measures to prevent employees falling into its moulding pits. This was a clear and obvious hazard that was known to the company. There had been a previous incident and HSE had already taken enforcement action in relation to this particular risk in 2018. It should be immediately foreseeable that harm is likely to result from a system whereby employees are required to walk past unprotected fall edges in the dark in order to open up a site."

Click [here](#) to read the full article.



## Food Waste Action Week- 6 March to 12 March 2023

A whole week of action to raising awareness of the environmental consequences of wasting food and promoting activities that help to reduce the amount of food we waste.

For further information please visit [www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk)



## Company fined £180K after woman's hand had to be amputated

A Greater Manchester company has been fined £180k after a female employee lost her hand after it was dragged into a machine. The employee was operating a blown line machine.



One of her colleagues isolated it from the main power supply after it became blocked with fibres. The employee unscrewed a Perspex window to identify the blockage, as she began to remove the fibres by hand, the machine still had some residual power and began to move again, drawing in her right hand. Read the full article [here](#).

## Building firm fined for multiple failings that included worker being lifted by raised bucket.

A building firm has been fined for a catalogue of health and safety failings that included two builders being lifted into the air by a raised telehandler bucket. A photograph caught the moment a pair of workers stood in the bucket of a digger to fit a stone into the top of a new home in Littleborough, Greater Manchester. Read the full article [here](#).



## Mothering Sunday - March 19th

Mother's Day is a special day for many, but it can also be a difficult day for lots of people.

Whilst it is lovely for some there can be many reasons for people of all ages to find Mother's Day hard.

Whatever your are feeling, remember you are not alone and your feelings are valid, please reach out to someone if you are able and to be gentle and good to yourself.

