



Infrastructure Projects Southern Toolbox Talk

Fatigue Awareness

16 August 2018

What is fatigue?



Fatigue can be described as “a state of extreme tiredness resulting from physical or mental exhaustion that can result from prolonged working, heavy workload, insufficient rest and inadequate sleep.”

Fatigue has been identified as a causal factor in incidents and accidents and can lead to reduced alertness, increased errors, impaired decision-making as well as a general deterioration in mood and motivation.

What causes fatigue?

The main causes of fatigue are:

- A loss of sleep – acute, for example, having four instead of the usual eight hours; or cumulative – having four hours instead of the usual eight over several days.
- Poor quality of sleep with lots of interruptions.
- Long working hours, particularly if these are as long as 14 to 16 hours.
- Poorly designed shift work.
- Inadequate breaks during the working day.



Recognising the signs

Fatigue can cause a vast number of physical, mental and emotional symptoms including:

- Chronic tiredness or sleepiness
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Sore or aching muscles
- Slowed reflexes and responses
- Impaired decision-making and judgment
- Hallucination
- Moodiness, such as irritability
- Impaired hand-to-eye coordination
- Appetite loss
- Reduced immune system function
- Blurry vision
- Short term memory problems
- Poor concentration
- Low motivation

Top tips for fighting fatigue

- **Try** to get at least seven to eight hours of sleep.
- **Avoid** drinking caffeinated drinks four to five hours before bed as this can cause sleeplessness.
- **Avoid** using technology 30 minutes before bed.
- **Eat** a healthy diet that promotes longer-lasting energy. Avoid fatty foods and junk food and stay hydrated by drinking lots of water.
- **Take** frequent breaks throughout the day.
- **Avoid** driving if you feel tired, especially in inclement weather where vision is impaired.

Reporting fatigue

A Southern Shield survey reported that only 80% of people would feel comfortable reporting fatigue in themselves or others. Fatigue is rarely reported with the main reason being fear of negative consequences. If you are concerned that you or a colleague is suffering with symptoms of fatigue, raise this with your line manager or supervisor. If you are concerned about your colleague, speak to them and offer support.

If you need support...

The confidential Southern Shield Employee Assistance Programme is available free to everybody working on behalf of Infrastructure Projects Southern. Call the 24-hour freephone number on **0800 358 459** or **+44 141 271 7540** from outside the UK or go online at www.validium.com to join the vClub using the username: **southernshield** and password: **homesafe**.