TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-FAT · Fatigue Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: All workers · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 8 November 2026

For every worker, and especially shift workers and long-hours workers: what causes fatigue, how it affects safety, and what the business and worker each do about it.

Fatigue is more than feeling tired. It is mental or physical exhaustion that reduces a person's ability to work safely, and it builds from long hours, shift and night work, not enough sleep, demanding work, long commutes and things outside work. Being awake for long periods affects performance in a similar way to alcohol.

This talk covers the causes and signs of fatigue, the controls in how work is designed and rostered, what workers do with their rest time, and how to raise fatigue without being judged.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain what fatigue is and how it affects reaction time, judgement and memory
- Identify the work causes of fatigue: long hours, shift and night work, call-outs, demanding tasks and travel
- Recognise the signs of fatigue in themselves and others
- Describe controls such as roster design, limits on hours, breaks and planning for call-outs
- Use rest time to get enough sleep, and plan travel to and from work
- Report fatigue and fatigue-related near misses through the right channel

What it covers

Module	Covers
What fatigue is	How it affects safety; Work causes and non-work causes; Sleep and the body clock
Controls	Rosters, hours and breaks; Call-outs and overtime; Travel and commuting
Your part	Signs to watch for; Using rest time; Speaking up about fatigue

Activities

- Spot the signs: workers list the signs of fatigue they would notice in themselves and a workmate
- Roster review: workers identify the riskiest points in a sample roster and suggest changes

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SAMPLE · HAZ-FAT Fatigue Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

Questions

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Fatigue Awareness

What causes fatigue, how it affects safety, and what the business and worker each do about it

20–30 minutes · All workers

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

FAT

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ What fatigue is and how it affects safety
- ✓ Work and non-work causes; the body clock
- ✓ Rosters, hours, breaks, call-outs, travel
- ✓ Signs, rest time and speaking up

This talk is not

- ✕ Heavy vehicle, rail, aviation or mining fatigue law training
- ✕ Roster design training
- ✕ Medical advice about sleep
- ✕ Our policy: **[Your fatigue policy or procedure]**

Awareness only. Heavy vehicle drivers and some other industries have specific fatigue laws, and need training in them.

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What fatigue is, and why it matters

Fatigue is mental or physical exhaustion that reduces your ability to work safely. It is more than feeling tired.

- Slower reactions, poorer judgement, worse memory
- Microsleeps: seconds asleep without knowing it
- People underestimate how impaired they are
- Being awake for long periods affects performance in a similar way to alcohol

A composite example

- A maintenance fitter is called out at 1 am for a breakdown, gets home at 4, and starts the usual day shift at 6. Mid-afternoon, isolating a conveyor, they skip a step they have done hundreds of times.
- Nobody planned for the call-out.

You cannot push through fatigue. Only sleep fixes it.

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Causes, sleep and the body clock

Work causes

- Long hours, overtime and long runs of shifts
- Night work, early starts and rotating shifts
- Call-outs and on-call
- Demanding, monotonous or physically hard work; heat
- Long commutes and work travel

Sleep and the body clock

- Most adults need about 7 to 9 hours' sleep
- The body clock makes us sleepiest in the early hours, and in the mid-afternoon
- Day sleep after a night shift is usually shorter and lighter
- Non-work causes: family, caring, second jobs, health, alcohol

Most fatigue comes from how the work is designed.

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Duties under WHS or OHS laws

The business must

- Manage the risk of fatigue like any other hazard
- Design rosters, hours and workloads so people can rest
- Plan for call-outs, overtime and travel
- Consult workers, and respond when fatigue is raised

You must

- Use your rest time to get enough sleep
- Come to work fit to work safely
- Tell your supervisor if you are too tired to work safely
- Report fatigue-related near misses

Heavy vehicles, rail, aviation and some mines have specific fatigue laws. Victoria's laws frame the duties in their own terms.

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TOOLBOX TALK · HAZ-FAT

Fatigue Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Fatigue is mental or physical exhaustion that reduces your ability to work safely. Most of it comes from how work is designed. Keep this page.

Control it, top first

1. Eliminate: no night work, call-outs or overtime that are not needed
2. Substitute: hazardous tasks on day shift; stay over instead of a long drive
3. Engineering: rest facilities, lighting, temperature
4. Administrative: rosters, hours limits, breaks, call-out rules

Using rest time

- Rest time is for sleep: most adults need 7 to 9 hours
- Dark, quiet, cool room; phone away
- After nights: sleep as soon as you get home
- Caffeine helps briefly; alcohol makes sleep worse
- Plan the drive home: it is part of the shift

Duties

- The business designs rosters, hours and workloads so people can rest
- You use rest time to sleep, and say when you are too tired

Signs to watch for

- ☐ Yawning, heavy or sore eyes, rubbing your eyes
- ☐ Head nodding; microsleeps of a few seconds
- ☐ Slow reactions; missing things you would usually see
- ☐ Trouble concentrating or remembering
- ☐ Mistakes, near misses, poor decisions
- ☐ Irritable, flat or withdrawn
- ☐ Drifting or missing turns when driving
- ☐ In a workmate: quiet, slow, making unusual errors

Speak up when

- You are too tired to work safely
- A workmate shows the signs
- A roster or call-out leaves no time to sleep
- Talk to: **[Who to talk to about fatigue here]**
- Report: **[How to report fatigue or a near miss here]**

You cannot push through fatigue. Saying you are too tired is reporting a hazard.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It does not cover heavy vehicle, rail, aviation or mining fatigue laws, or give medical advice.

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