



WORKSAFE

## Fatigue

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ADVICE FOR SMALL  
BUSINESS OWNERS ON  
MANAGING THE RISK  
OF FATIGUE AT THEIR  
WORKPLACE

IN 2016\*

43%

of workers said they worked when overtired 'from time to time' or 'a lot'

24%

of businesses said their workers worked when overtired 'from time to time' or 'a lot'

**Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015:**

You have to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable. These risks include:

- your workers becoming fatigued from the work they do
- workers coming to work fatigued.

If workers are fatigued, they could harm themselves or others.



\* Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviours Survey in the New Zealand Workforce 2016.

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# Fatigue

## **WHAT IS FATIGUE?**

Fatigue is more than just feeling tired. When we are fatigued, our mental and physical functioning is affected in lots of different ways, which can make it hard for us to work safely.

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## **WHAT DOES FATIGUE LOOK LIKE? SOME EXAMPLES ARE:**

- Extreme tiredness
- Making lots of mistakes
- Hard to talk normally
- Harder to make safe choices
- Slow reaction times
- Mood swings

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## **WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF SOMEONE IS FATIGUED?**

- Can make it difficult for the person to work safely
- Can put the person, and others around them, in danger

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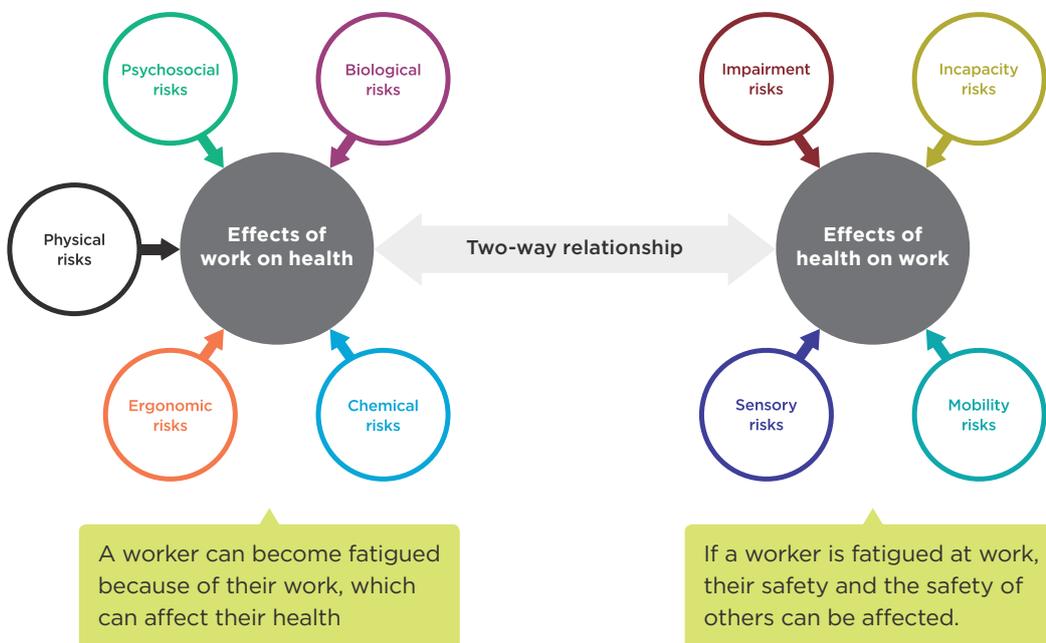
## **WHY CAN FATIGUE HAPPEN? SOME EXAMPLES ARE:**

- Not getting enough sleep, or having sleep disrupted a lot
  - Long or changeable work hours
  - Physically or mentally hard work
  - Very hot or very cold working environments
  - Personal stress
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# The two-way relationship between work and health

Work can affect a person's health, and health can affect a worker's ability to work safely.



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When you're deciding how to manage the risk of fatigue at your workplace, think about how:



work can affect health



health can affect work

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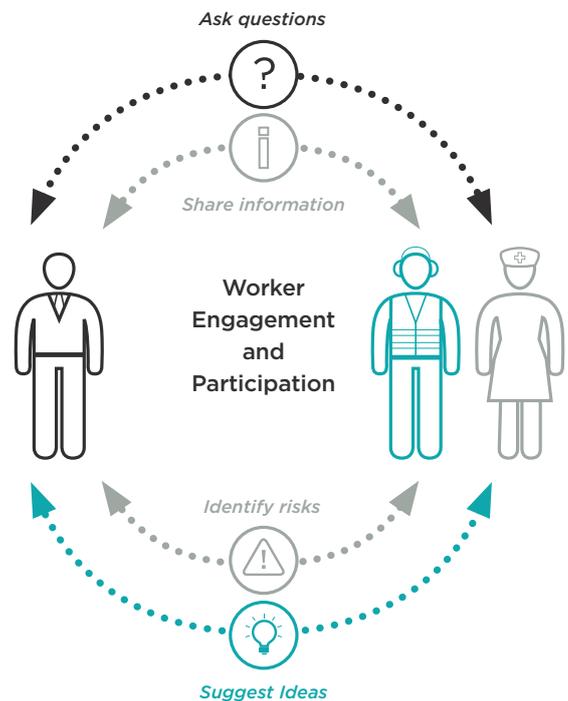
# Worker engagement and participation

You have an on-going duty to engage with your workers when making decisions about how you will manage the risk of fatigue at your work, because it is a health and safety matter that directly affects them.

Ask your workers for ideas about how to manage the risk of fatigue at work, because they know what happens at work every day.

See the WorkSafe website for more information on:

- fatigue
- worker engagement and participation
- managing work risks
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- General Risk and Workplace Management Regulations.



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# Ways to reduce the risk of fatigue at work

There are lots of ways you can reduce the risk of fatigue at your work. Some examples are:

- Find out what is happening at your work that could cause fatigue. Look at when and for how long your workers work, what kinds of jobs they carry out, and what the working conditions are like.
- Find out what your workers already know about the risk of fatigue, including what it looks like in themselves and others, why it happens and how they can stop it from happening to them.
- Make sure workers have enough breaks, and don't skip them. Look at what healthy food and drink options are available at your work.
- When making your rosters, think about people's natural sleeping patterns. Try to avoid very early or very late starts, and design shifts so they are rotating forward.
- Make sure workers are not swapping shifts with each other too often, or spending too much time on-call.
- Vary the jobs a worker does.
- Have a healthy physical working environment. Make sure workers have clean drinking water, provide rest break areas for all weather conditions, and make sure workers don't become too hot or too cold.
- Think about how workers will get to and from work, especially if they are working long or irregular hours. Give them different transport options other than driving if possible.
- Have an open and safe culture at your work. Workers need to feel comfortable talking to you about fatigue without worrying about getting in trouble.
- Have a system in place that workers can use to report to you if they feel fatigued, or if something goes wrong at work because of fatigue.
- Check in with your workers regularly to find out if they are feeling fatigued, and if anything needs to change to further reduce the risk of fatigue in your workplace.
- Use the information you collect from your workers to inform your thinking on how you manage fatigue at your workplace.
- Review your rosters and schedules from time to time, to make sure they are still appropriate for your workers.





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