

# Fatigue

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Fatigue is an issue in the extractives industry with the introduction of 24-hour operations and 12-hour shifts. With more focus on commuting accidents and fatalities, there is growing concern about the effect of fatigue on mine workers and on general road users.

**Follow these four simple steps to reduce risk of injury:**

## Identify



Identify work, shifts and rosters that impact on the amount of sleep time available to workers

## Assess



Assess what impact identified activities have on worker's rest and sleep

## Control



Use controls listed below to reduce the risk of fatigue to workers

## Monitor



Review agreed action plans  
Regular review of Worker Health Plan

## Workers suffering fatigue are a health and safety risk to themselves, others, and workplace assets

### Such workers may:

- Have difficulty remembering or concentrating
- Always be in a bad mood
- Make more mistakes and/or have more accidents
- Make bad decisions
- Fall asleep at work (micro-sleeps)

## Some facts around fatigue

- While a worker can experience fatigue at any time of day, peak injury times are midnight, 3am and 5am
- Workers require at least 2 full nights sleep to recover from fatigue
- Being awake for 17 hours impairs performance to the same level as the legal blood alcohol level
- As well as lack of sleep, fatigue can be brought on by emotional distress, poor diet, and physical exertion

**As the need for sleep builds up, mental and physical impairment can result - leading to errors in decision-making and safety. Micro-sleeps, where the person falls asleep briefly, are potentially deadly if they occur at the wrong time.**

### Controls include:



- Have an optimal shift schedule that allows adequate time for recovery sleep
- Plan forward rotating shifts (day to afternoon to night)
- Ensure workers have at least 7 hours of sleep per 24 hours
- Screen for sleep disorders or health issues (eg pre-employment questionnaires)
- Establish a fatigue management plan.

For more information see [A guide to Worker Health in Extractives](#) on the MinEx website.