

Avoiding the hazards of worker fatigue

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Staff Report

Workers are bound to feel more tired at the end of a long shift – work can be pretty exhausting. But worker fatigue is a serious safety issue. It affects the ability to think clearly.

As a result, people who are tired don't always recognize their own level of impairment.

And fatigued workers are less productive and are more likely to suffer injuries or other safety incidents on the job.

In fact, staying up for 21 straight hours is the equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 0.08 – the legal limit in many states.

If you think a worker looks constantly tired, you should take action immediately.

Look for some of these other symptoms of fatigue:

- sleeping on the job
- reduced attention span
- slower reactions and reduced manual skills
- delayed thinking
- cutting corners or poor time management, and
- increased risk-taking.

Ensure your employees are rested

There are a number of tactics, more healthy than chugging coffee, you can use to make sure your workers are well rested and alert.

Obviously you can't force your workers to sleep or monitor all of their habits, but you can encourage employees to:

- avoid caffeine three to five hours before going to bed.
- take naps (off the clock) – they're most effective if they're less than an hour or longer than 90 minutes
- develop good overall health habits such as daily physical activity and a balanced diet, and
- average eight hours of sleep a night – the recommended amount for an adult.

Ensuring your employees are following these tips should help them to be well rested on the job and avoid fatigue hazards.

