

Health and Safety Bulletin

The need for sleep....

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Useful contacts:

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There is plenty of evidence that a lack of sleep has serious consequences for human beings – it is important for both our physiological and psychological health. Did you know, for example, that when the clocks go forward in the US and people have one hour less sleep there is a 24% increase in heart attacks but when the clocks go back by an hour in the autumn there is a 21% decrease in heart attacks? There is also evidence of a relationship between the clocks going back and a spike in road traffic accidents.

Sleep is a biological necessity – yet humans choose to forego it, unlike any other species. People generally need between 7.5 and 9 hours good quality sleep, preferably undisturbed in a single continuous period, yet often, sleep is the first thing we sacrifice in our busy lives.

How a lack of sleep affects our health

There has been a lot of research into this topic, much of it focused on the effect of shift work. The conclusions categorize the results of excessive fatigue as: -

- Physical – a lack of sleep can not only result in a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, but also impaired immune function because white blood cell numbers decrease - we rely on them to identify and destroy harmful intruders such as cancerous tumours
- Cognitive – without sleep, people are less vigilant, alert and able to concentrate. If employees carry out vigilance-based tasks (e.g. monitoring controls or alarms), there is an increased risk of omission – this may result in delaying or failing to respond to an abnormal condition
- Psychological – initial symptoms of fatigue include increased emotional state, a lack of motivation or being more irritable but can evolve into depression or anxiety. Lack of sleep has also been linked to Alzheimer's disease

There is abundant evidence that the lack of sleep (or lack of quality sleep) increases the risk of accidents – with one study suggesting that it increases the risk of workplace accidents by over 70%.

Managing the risks

The responsibility for managing the risks associated with fatigue lie with both the organization and each individual employee.

The organization and its leaders need to demonstrate the right culture – one where working excessive hours is not “normal” and the need to take breaks (to rest and recharge) is vital.

Individuals also need to take action – recognizing that in their role as a truck driver or machine operator - coming to work fatigued is putting both themselves and their colleagues at significant risk. We all have a moral duty to turn up fit for work.

Conclusion

Both employers and employees have control over the risk of fatigue, but often fail to recognize the potential consequences, both work-related and personal.



Useful websites/webinars

- [The Sleep Charity](#)
- [Sleep – Top Tips](#)
- [Night Club — The Liminal Space \(the-liminal-space.com\)](#)
- [Fatigue quick guide | WorkSafe](#)
- [Sleep - Osmond Ergonomics](#)

Recently issued health and safety information:

- WISH Guidance document 26 - Managing health and safety at Household waste recycling Centres (hwrc)/civic amenity (ca) Sites [WISH-WASTE-26-Health-and-safety-at-HWRC-CA-sites-V2-April-2024.pdf](#) (wishforum.org.uk)
- HSE safety alert for lorry loaders crush risk from powered tilting stabilisers <https://www.hse.gov.uk/safetybulletins/lorry-loaders.htm>
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: Menopause in the workplace – employers guidance <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/menopause-workplace-guidance-employers#explainervideos>

HSE's 2023-24 provisional statistics released

The HSE has released provisional data on work-related fatalities in GB over the last financial year, with 138 workers killed – this is an increase of two from 2022-23. The fatality rate has now returned to the level prior to the COVID pandemic.

95% of the fatal injuries to workers involved men, with workers aged 60 or more accounting for 34% of the fatalities, even though they only make up 11% of the workforce (this reflects the trend in previous years).

65% of the fatalities occurred in the construction, agriculture and manufacturing sectors – the number of fatal accidents in the construction industry are statistically significantly higher than before the pandemic, although in terms of fatality rate, the agriculture sector has the highest.

86% of fatalities were caused by fall from height, struck by moving vehicle, struck by moving object, trapped by something collapsing or overturning or contact with moving machinery.

Further information is available at [fatalinjuries.pdf \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Case Law update

This issue focuses on recent cases that resulted in fatal accidents

In April 2024 a company in Doncaster was fined after a 52-year old employee was killed when a mixer wagon fell onto him. He had been replacing the wagon's two front wheels, had removed the existing wheels and had entered the underside of the vehicle in an attempt to prop it higher up using a bottle jack when it fell on top of him. The HSE investigation into this incident found the employer failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for

replacing the wheels on the wagon and had also failed to put in place a system of work that ensured the work could be carried out safely. They were fined **£50,000** and ordered to pay **£16,717.15** in costs

An Oldham-based haulage company was fined **£86,710** and was ordered to pay **£5,903** costs after a fork lift truck driver was killed while loading a heavy goods vehicle (HGV). The FLT driver was loading pallets onto the HGV when the HGV moved forward, causing the fork lift truck to overturn. The driver, who was not wearing a seat belt was trapped beneath the vehicle. The HSE investigation found that the employer had failed to put sufficient safe systems of work in place regarding vehicle movements, or to ensure that all fork lift truck drivers were compelled to wear seat belts. The court was told that, had the driver been wearing a seat belt, it is highly likely that this would have saved his life

Both employer and its director were prosecuted after an employee died after he suffered a cardiac arrest when a number of toughened glass panels fell on him as he was trying to retrieve one from a stack leaning against a wall. The HSE investigation found the company had failed to assess the risks associated with storing and handling the panes of glass, implement a safe

system of work and provide adequate training and supervision. Its director was aware of the failings but failed to implement the measures required to ensure the safety of his employees and members of the public that had access to the glass storage shed. The company would have been fined **£120,000** but due to its liquidation status this was reduced to a nominal fine of **£2,200**. The director was given **20 weeks and 14 weeks custodial sentences** to run concurrently, but they were **suspended for 12 months**

An employer was fined **£200,000** and ordered to pay **£43,000** in costs and a site manager sentenced to **10 months suspended for 18 months** during which time he must complete **200 hours of unpaid work** and pay costs of **£10,000** after a worker was killed. The worker was drawn into a conveyer and suffered multiple injuries because a number of guards had been removed

An employee operating a MEWP was crushed and killed because he had insufficient training to operate it. The director of the company, was given a **16 weeks custodial sentence**, which was **suspended for 12 months**. The employer was also fined **£40,000** with **£9,424** costs

About Clwyd Associates...

We are a management consultancy, focusing on health and safety, and SAP based in the Midlands.

We employ consultants with at least 15 years practical experience backed up by recognised professional and academic qualifications - ensuring our clients receive first class service.

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