



Health and Safety
Santé et sécurité

HAZARD

Night Shifts and Fatigue

Night shifts

Night shift work is a health hazard for workers. Many PSAC members have no choice but to work night shifts as part of completing the assigned duties of their job. PSAC advocates that night shift work be officially identified as a hazard in all workplaces to ensure that the employer is motivated to take action to mitigate the risks associated with night shift work.

KEY HAZARDS FOR NIGHT SHIFTS INCLUDE:

- fatigue
- poor environmental conditions (e.g. poor lighting)
- isolation
- health impacts (e.g. circadian rhythm disruption)
- increased accident risk

The International Agency for Research on Cancer classify night shifts to probably be carcinogenic to humans. Research has documented the link between the disruption of the circadian rhythm and several cancers.

MEASURES FOR MITIGATING THE RISK OF NIGHT SHIFTS CAN INCLUDE:

- managing shift patterns and rest periods
- providing health assessments
- ensuring adequate training
- implementing effective safety protocols
- improving the physical work environment

Night shift risk assessment process

1. IDENTIFY HAZARDS:

- **Workload and shift pattern:** Consider the intensity of the work, the duration of shifts, the rest periods, and how frequently the shift schedule rotates.
- **Physical environment:** Assess the quality of lighting, potential obstructions, noise levels, and the overall physical condition of the workplace.
- **Worker health:** Evaluate factors like fatigue, potential sleep disruption, and pre-existing health conditions that could be exacerbated by night work.
- **Social issues:** Consider potential isolation, lack of immediate support, and access to adequate breaks and relevant facilities (i.e. showers, break rooms).
- **Equipment and machinery:** Ensure all equipment is in good working order, especially safety features, and that operators are properly trained.

2. IDENTIFY WHO MIGHT BE HARMED AND HOW:

- Consider all night shift workers, including those on different types of rotation.
- Identify potential harm, such as fatigue-related accidents, health conditions like mood changes or cardiovascular issues, and injuries from falls or poor visibility.



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3. EVALUATE RISKS AND DECIDE ON CONTROL MEASURES:

- **Control fatigue:** Implement strategies like providing health assessments, offering training on night work impacts, and monitoring employee health and welfare.
- **Improve the environment:** Ensure sufficient lighting, clear visibility, and remove potential tripping hazards.
- **Manage shift patterns:** Use appropriate shift rotation to minimize disruption to natural sleep cycles.
- **Promote health:** Encourage healthy habits such as proper nutrition, hydration, and exercise during night shifts.
- **Ensure safety procedures are known and followed:** Mandate clean hi-visibility clothing, ensure equipment is well-maintained, and have emergency procedures in place.

4. RECORD FINDINGS AND IMPLEMENT CONTROLS:

- Document all identified risks, and the control measures put in place.
- Ensure controls are implemented, such as providing training on how to manage night work and promoting good sleep hygiene.

5. REVIEW AND UPDATE:

- Periodically review the risk assessment to ensure the control measures are effective and relevant to any changes in operations or workplace conditions.

CCOHS RESOURCES

ROTATIONAL SHIFTWORK

<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/shiftwrk.html>

FATIGUE AND WORK INFOGRAPHIC

<https://www.ccohs.ca/products/posters/fatigue>

OSH ANSWERS FACT SHEET ON FATIGUE

<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/fatigue.html>

CHECKLIST



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Fatigue

This checklist provides guidance to assist in identifying risks of fatigue. If the answer is yes to any of these questions, fatigue risks may need to be further assessed, and control measures may need to be implemented to mitigate the identified risks.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WORK DEMANDS	Yes	No
Does anyone carry out physically demanding work for long periods? (i.e. tasks which are physically tiring and repetitive)		
Does anyone carry out mentally demanding work for long periods? (i.e. work requiring vigilance, work requiring continuous concentration and minimal stimulation, work performed under pressure, tight deadlines, emergency call outs, interacting with the public)		
WORK SCHEDULING AND PLANNING		
Does anyone consistently work or travel between midnight and 6 am?		
Does the work schedule prevent workers having at least one full day off per week?		
Does the roster make it difficult for workers to consistently have at least two consecutive nights sleep per week?		
Do work practices include on-call work, call-backs or sleepovers?		
Does the roster differ from the hours actually worked?		
Does the work roster include rotating shifts?		
Does anyone have to travel more than one hour to get to their job?		
WORK TIME		
Does anyone regularly work more than 12 hours in one shift (including overtime)?		
Does anyone have less than 10 hours break between shifts? (i.e. split shifts, quick shift changeovers)		
Is work performed at low body clock times (between 2 am and 6 am)?		

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS	Yes	No
Is work carried out in harsh or uncomfortable conditions? (i.e. hot, humid or cold temperatures)		
Does anyone work with equipment or machinery that vibrates?		
Is anyone working with hazardous chemicals?		
Is anyone consistently exposed to loud noise?		
NON-WORK FACTORS		
Are workers arriving at work fatigued?		