



KENTUCKY
AGC Self Insurers' Fund

Fatigue Management: Long Shifts, Night Work, Hydration, and Micro Breaks

Fatigue is a serious jobsite hazard. Long shifts, overnight work, heat, physical labor, and long commutes can reduce alertness, slow reaction time, and increase the risk of vehicle crashes, equipment incidents, falls, struck by hazards, and poor decisions. Managing fatigue should be part of every safety program.

Recognize the Warning Signs. Watch for workers who:

- Yawn frequently or struggle to stay alert.
- Have slower reactions or poor coordination.
- Make repeated mistakes or forget routine tasks.
- Have difficulty concentrating or communicating.
- Become unusually irritable or withdrawn.

Workers should report fatigue before it becomes a safety issue.

Managing Long Shifts. When extended work hours are necessary:

- Limit excessive overtime whenever possible.
- Rotate physically and mentally demanding tasks.
- Schedule high risk work early in the shift.
- Closely monitor employees working more than 10 to 12 hours or several consecutive long days.

Working at Night. Night work disrupts the body's natural sleep cycle. Help reduce risk by:

- Providing adequate lighting without excessive glare.
- Maintaining clear communication and supervision.
- Encouraging consistent sleep schedules between shifts.
- Allowing extra time for complex or high risk work.

Hydration Matters. Even mild dehydration contributes to fatigue and slower thinking.

- Drink water regularly throughout the shift.
- Increase fluids during hot weather or heavy physical work.
- Replace electrolytes when sweating heavily.
- Avoid relying on excessive caffeine or energy drinks.

Take Micro Breaks. Brief recovery breaks help restore alertness.

- Take one to three minute breaks every hour or two when practical.
- Stretch, change position, and rest your eyes.
- Use breaks to hydrate and assess your alertness.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors should watch for signs of fatigue, encourage workers to speak up, adjust assignments when necessary, and stop work if fatigue creates an unacceptable risk.

Remember: Fatigue is a recognized safety hazard. Proper scheduling, quality sleep, hydration, and short recovery breaks help workers stay alert, reduce incidents, and return home safely every day.