

# TOOLBOX TALK

## NIGHT WORK - Managers / Supervisors

Irregular hours of work and work patterns such as night shifts can lead to disruption of the internal body clock, sleeping difficulties and fatigue

### ASSESS ANY RISKS

Factors to consider during risk assessment are:

- Identify the hazards
  - Who might be harmed?
  - Evaluate the risks
  - Record your significant findings
  - Regularly review your risk assessment
- The workload & work activity
  - Shift timing and duration
  - Direction of shift rotation. It is better for the shifts to run in a 'forward rotation', i.e. morning / afternoon / night
  - The number and length of breaks within a shift
  - Rest periods between shift

### GUIDELINES FOR THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Provide similar facilities as those available during daytime and allow night workers time for training and development.
- Ensure temperature & lighting is appropriate and preferably adjustable
- Provide training and information on the risks of night work and ensure supervisors and management can recognise problems.
- Consider increasing supervision during periods of low alertness.
- Encourage interaction between workers and provide a means of contact for lone workers.
- Ensure the workplace and surroundings are well lit, safe and secure
- Control overtime, shift swapping and on-call duties and discourage workers from taking second jobs.
- Set standards and allow time for communication at shift handovers.



### WORKER NEEDS: Use assessment tools such as HSE's Fatigue and Risk Index Tool / the 'Epworth sleepiness scale' to determine sleepiness

- 1. Younger or older workers;
- 2. New & expectant mothers;
- 3. Workers with pre-existing health conditions, e.g. taking time-dependent insulin medication
- 4. Workers, who have remained on call through the subsequent night /weekend after a standard day's work.
- 5. Temporary, agency, sub-contractors and maintenance workers, who may not be familiar with current shift work schedules

### GUIDELINES FOR SHIFT DESIGN:

Plan an appropriate and varied workload.

- Allow 2 nights' full sleep when switching from day to night shifts and vice versa
- Ensure there is adequate rest time between shifts. Under the WTR, the minimum time allowed between shifts is 11 hours
- Offer a choice of permanent or rotating shifts and try to avoid permanent night shifts. Either rotate shifts every 2-3 days or every 3-4 weeks - otherwise adopt forward rotating shifts.
- Limit night shifts to 8hr especially if the work is demanding, monotonous, dangerous and / or safety critical.
- Encourage workers to take regular breaks and allow some choice as to when they are taken.
- Limit night shifts to 2-3 consecutive shifts.
- Build regular free weekends into the shift schedule.
- Avoid critical jobs at the ends of shifts or at 'low points' in the night e.g. 3a.m.



### HEALTH ASSESSMENT

- Make sure workers are aware of their entitlement to a voluntary night work assessment before they start night shift and at regular intervals. Then at least annually thereafter.
- Keep a record of who has been offered the health assessment.
- Encourage workers to tell their GPs that they are night workers and have access to a health assessment.
- Certain medical conditions may prevent the worker from undertaking night shifts; where the Equality Act 2010 applies reasonable adjustment should be considered.



**INVESTIGATE** thoroughly incidents or accidents where fatigue may be responsible