Fatigue management toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.21, 1926.51, 1910.141, 1926.50, 1910.151

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

How did you sleep last night, and how would you know if you were too tired to work safely today?

Why it matters

A tired worker reacts slower, misses hazards and makes more mistakes, often without noticing. Fatigue builds up from long shifts, night work, heat, hard physical work, stress and too many short nights in a row. Around equipment, heights or traffic, one slow reaction can be enough to get someone hurt.

Key points

1. **What OSHA says about fatigue**
   OSHA has no specific standard for worker fatigue and no general limit on work hours. The general duty to train still applies: in construction, the employer must instruct each employee in recognizing and avoiding unsafe conditions and the regulations that apply to their work environment. Treat working while overly tired as a hazard like any other, and know any fit-for-duty or scheduling rules your company has.
   29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2)

2. **Know the signs**
   Watch for yawning, heavy eyelids, nodding off, slow reactions, trouble focusing, forgetting steps, irritability and headaches. In yourself, an early sign is missing something you would normally catch. In a coworker, it can look like zoning out, careless mistakes or a short temper.

3. **Protect your sleep**
   Only sleep can make up for lost sleep, and the loss adds up over several short nights. Keep a regular sleep schedule, make your room dark, quiet and cool, and put the phone away before bed. If you work nights, block out daylight and protect your sleep time like an appointment. Caffeine can hide tiredness for a while, but it does not replace sleep.

4. **Plan long shifts and hard work**
   Schedule the hardest and most dangerous tasks for when people are most alert, not at the end of a long shift. Take your breaks, drink water and eat real food. Rotate heavy or repetitive tasks, and be extra careful after several long days or night shifts in a row. In winter, short days and less daylight can leave some people feeling more tired, so watch for it in yourself and your crew.

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5 **Speak up when you are not fit for duty**

If you are too tired to work safely, tell your supervisor before you start a hazardous task, not after something goes wrong. If a coworker seems unsafe, say something to them and let the supervisor know. Stress and worry can also wear you down and cost you sleep, so talk to someone you trust or use your employee assistance program if your company has one.

6 **Get home safely**

Drowsy driving after a long shift is a serious danger. If you are fighting to stay awake, get a ride or rest before you drive. If it hits while you are on the road, pull over somewhere safe. Carpool when you can, and check on coworkers who have a long drive after a double shift.

Scenario

Picture this: A crew has worked long days all week to beat a deadline. On the last night, a worker who has been getting only a few hours of sleep is running a saw and feels his eyes closing. He does not want to look weak, so he keeps going and plans to drive straight home after. What are the warning signs here, and what should he, his coworkers and the foreman do?

Crew discussion

1. What signs tell you that you are too tired to work safely?
2. Which tasks on our job are the most dangerous to do tired?
3. What should you do if you think a coworker is too tired to work or drive safely?
4. What gets in the way of good sleep for you, and what helps?

Bottom line

Treat fatigue like any other hazard: get real sleep, plan the hardest work for when you are alert, and speak up when you or a coworker is not fit for duty.

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Worker fatigue / Fatiga laboral

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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