

Sleep Times



Did You Know

Companies that provide shiftwork training have:

59% lower workers' compensation costs

73% reduction in employee turnover

Lower accident and error rates

Healthier, better rested and more productive shift workers

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Message from the President

Welcome to Quanta Dynamics' E-newsletter! Each month we hope you'll enjoy current information about sleep, and its relationship to diet/nutrition, exercise, health, safety and performance issues.

Sincerely,
Mary O'Sullivan
President

The Secret Cost of Fatigue

Companies See Fatigue as the Employee's Problem

A common perception about fatigue among companies today is that it is the employees' responsibility to come to work rested, and they are held accountable if they are unable to do the job they have been trained to do. In other words, fatigue is often perceived as a behavioral problem. But those individuals who have lived and worked shiftwork know there is more to the story.

Companies often view employees' capacity to work as they do their machinery. Employees should be able to work as many days in a row as they would like without any major difficulty. Besides, overtime saves on extra hiring with costly benefits, and it helps fill absences, vacations, and other benefit days off, by increasing overtime to those who want it. An added bonus is that people like to earn extra money.

Research Confirms Shiftwork Fatigue a Physiological Problem

Extensive research confirms that fatigue related to shiftwork is fundamentally a physiological problem, not a behavioral one. Employee behavior can induce or compound fatigue, but for most shiftworkers, this is the exception and not the rule. Facts show that shiftwork fatigue is driven primarily by 4 factors:

1. Our biological clocks/circadian rhythms (i.e. basic human physiology)

2. The operational necessity to keep the equipment running 24 hours per day (i.e. automation, continuous process, asset utilization, reduced unit costs, consistent customer service, etc.)
3. Counter productive management attitudes, policies, and operating procedures that detract from human performance rather than supporting it (i.e. lack of knowledge/understanding)
4. Lack of employee knowledge and understanding of how to manage shiftwork, in general, and fatigue and alertness levels, in particular (i.e. lack of training)

Descriptions of Employee Fatigue

- Impaired alertness/ slower reaction times
- Reduced vigilance/attentiveness
- Impaired mental/physical performance
- Lack of cognitive/logical reasoning skills
- Impaired judgment
- Reduced motor coordination
- Loss of environmental awareness
- Reduced ability to process communications

Corporate and Employee Consequences of Fatigue

- Reduced Ability to Work Safely
- Increased Costs, Risks, and Liabilities
- Reduced Operating Profit/Efficiency
- Reduced Productivity/Customer Service
- Increased Health/Wellness Costs
- Inadequate/Ineffective Communications
- Increased Turnover/Absenteeism
- Reduced Morale/Poorer Labor Relations

Total National Costs of Fatigue Per Year

Accidents: \$8.5 Billion Health Care: \$28.3 Billion Lost Productivity: \$70.7 Billion

Total Costs: \$116.5 Billion

Why Not Better Manage Employee Fatigue?

Many companies continue to lose money and risk employee safety by not recognizing the importance of managing fatigue. Evidence shows that over 90% of shiftworkers receive no training on how to manage their schedules and alternative lifestyles. They frequently have trouble adapting to the unique physical and social challenges of shiftwork and fall into its common pitfalls compromising their ability to perform well — one of many reasons why these employees cost companies about **\$8,600 per person, per year, in excess cost over and above their daytime counterparts.**

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Devising a Fatigue Management Plan

Key elements of a fatigue management plan to optimize productivity and safety include:

1. Develop better monitoring of work schedules and overtime workers to minimize excessive fatigue.
2. Improve staffing levels to maintain manageable overtime levels.
3. Provide lifestyle training for shiftworkers, especially new hires, to help them improve sleep techniques and better cope with difficult work times.
4. Evaluate lighting, temperature, sound and other environmental elements in the workplace.
5. Reinforce your commitment to fatigue reduction by attending workshops and reading industry support publications for their helpful tips.

With today's knowledge of fatigue-based interventions and the use of fatigue management plans, improved shiftwork productivity can reveal a new source of operating profit and reliability that never existed before.

Excerpts from CIRCADIAN 2005 Shiftwork Practices Report: www.circadian.com

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