

# NOVEMBER

## SAFETY TALK

What's all the concern about fatigue?

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, workers are required to notify their supervisor if they are unfit for work. Likewise, supervisors are required to not assign workers to safety-sensitive positions if their ability to work is impaired (by alcohol or other drugs, or by fatigue).

Some research suggests that when workers have less than five hours sleep or after being awake for more than 16 hours, there is a greater chance that fatigue will lead to making mistakes – which in safety-sensitive positions, can be fatal.

The number of hours awake can be similar to impairment from alcohol. For instance, one study showed the following:

- 17 hours awake = 0.05 blood alcohol content (bhc)
- 21 hours = 0.08 bhc (legal limit in Canada)
- 24-25 hours = 0.10 bhc



## FATIGUE AND FIT FOR WORK

Fatigue affects people differently. It can lead to:

- Slower reaction time
- Impaired concentration
- Reduced motivation to “do a good job”
- Reduced mental and physical ability
- Reduced ability to handle stress on the job
- Potential for risk taking that wouldn't normally be present

Here are just a few signs of fatigue:

- Tiredness, falling asleep
- Lack of motivation
- Headaches
- Loss of appetite
- Reduced alertness, concentration and memory

Workplace studies have shown that most incidents occur when the body would really rather be asleep – between midnight and 6 a.m., and between 1 and 3 p.m. While most municipal employees don't work shift work, those that do, or those who are called in on emergencies, could be at risk of injury from fatigue.

**Slapping yourself to try and shake the “fuzziness” that fatigue causes is not a solution! The only solution is sufficient sleep – good, solid, REM sleep.**



Some tips to achieve that:

- Power down your phone
- Block your clock; don't look at it several times a night
- Don't sit in bed and watch TV, work or surf the internet
- The best sleep temperature for most people is between 20 and 22.2c
- Go to sleep and wake up at roughly the same time every day (even weekends)

BCMSA offers the following courses:

- Fatigue Management: Sr. Leadership / Management, and
- Fatigue Management: Supervisor / H&S Committees