STRESS AND FATIGUE POLICY

Introduction

We value the health and safety of our employees. We appreciate that due to client deadlines, the workload and workplace dynamics, that stress can occur in the workplace. Everyone responds to stress differently. Excess stress can result in lower team morale, increased absenteeism, decreased productivity and increased accident rates.

The most effective way of dealing with occupational stress is through open, honest communication with fellow employees and management.

Our management team commits to being open and approachable with employees and to adopting a risk management approach to occupational stress. We endeavour to identify potential stressors and their effect and develop measures to minimise stress.

We will investigate workplace accidents or incidents to determine if employee fatigue is a factor. We will look at absenteeism rates amongst our employees and look for uncharacteristic behaviour, which can suggest employee stress.

We encourage our employees to use their own skills and training and where possible manage their own work-flow.

1. Purpose

TechCompServices recognizes that fatigue affects a person's health and wellbeing, increases the chance of illness and workplace injuries occurring, and reduces performance and productivity within the workplace.

The purpose of this policy is to highlight the effects and risks of employee fatigue, the shared responsibility to manage it appropriately, and the preventative actions that should be planned and taken to minimise associated risks.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all TechCompServices employees, contractors and visitors whilst at the workplace or whilst carrying out activities on behalf of TechCompServices, including:

2.1   Workers who undertake significant driving as part of their roles.

2.2   Workers who undertake significant travel as part of their roles.

2.3   Workers who work at host employers' premises and other sites, particularly remote sites requiring lengthy drives on country roads.

3. Definition

As this policy document will influence decision-making and provide the basis for related policies, strategies and actions, it is important that fatigue - as well as its symptoms, effects and remedies – be clearly defined.

3.1   It is normal to feel tired after prolonged mental or physical effort at work. Fatigue, however, is more than just feeling tired. Safe Work Australia defines fatigue as an acute and ongoing

state of tiredness that leads to mental and/or physical exhaustion and prevents people from functioning within normal boundaries.

3.2   Fatigue can accumulate over time, and may be caused by:

• work-related factors such as; length of time worked, inadequate rest breaks and/or sleep, harsh environmental conditions

• lifestyle factors such as; poor quality of sleep, family responsibilities, social life, commuting time to and from work

• a combination of both.

3.3   Signs of fatigue may include:

• headaches and/or dizziness

• difficulty keeping eyes open

• constant yawning

• muscle weakness

• lacking energy

3.4   Immediate effects of fatigue may include:

• lack of concentration

• reduced short-term memory

• increased errors

• slower reaction times

• impaired decision-making and judgment (including being unaware of the state of fatigue)

• reduced immune system function

3.5   Longer-term effects of fatigue may include:

• high blood pressure and/or heart disease

• depression and/or anxiety

• diabetes and/or gastro-intestinal disorders

3.6   Studies show that 17 hours awake has a similar effect on the body as blood alcohol content of .05%, and 24 hours awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 1%.

3.7   Sleep is the only effective long-term strategy to prevent and manage fatigue. While tired muscles can recover with rest, the brain can recover only with sleep. An adult generally requires seven to eight hours of sleep daily, taken in a single continuous period. When individuals get less sleep than they need in a day, they build up a sleep debt. Each additional day without enough sleep increases the debt which, when it becomes large enough, causes fatigue. The only way to reduce or cancel a sleep debt is by sleeping additional hours.

4. Policy

TechCompServices is committed to achieving a high standard of fatigue awareness and management at all workplaces and sites. This policy is deliberately broad and outlines the minimum standards acceptable for a safe working environment.

4.1   A risk management approach to fatigue Risk management, in the context of work activity safety, is the process of identifying hazards, assessing the likelihood and consequences of the risks of injury or illness occurring, and eliminating risks (where reasonably practicable), or implementing control measures to appropriately manage the risks.

Like any other hazard in the workplace, when fatigue may affect a person's ability to work safely, it must be identified, assessed and controlled. TechCompServices supports the following three-step risk management approach to fatigue which should be undertaken in consultation with workplace health and safety representatives.

Refer to the Risk Management Policy & Procedure (HSE.019) for more detailed risk management techniques and requirements.

4.1.1.   Identify possible causes of fatigue, bearing in mind that factors can be interrelated:

- long hours at work

- concentrating for long periods of time without breaks

- a lot of travelling or driving

- possible personal issues e.g. family responsibilities or health problems.

This can be done by consulting with employees, analyzing work hours and comparing planned with actual hours, reviewing workplace incident data, and checking whether employees have had accidents travelling home or on work-related trips.

4.1.2.   Assess the risks associated with fatigue:

- use the risk matrix to determine the consequence x likelihood = risk score

- the risk score will aid in determining priorities

4.1.3.   Implement control measures that focus on the actual causes rather than symptoms, and that aim to eliminate or minimise the factors that cause fatigue at the source. Use the Hierarchy of Control to determine the most practicable controls with the most reduced risk. Some of these control measures will be systemic, i.e. relevant to all TechCompServices workplaces and sites; others will be appropriate for a specific site. Examples of controls to be implement:

- ensure workplaces are well-lit and ventilated

- ensure employees take adequate breaks

- provide information and training on fatigue management

- encourage employees to report any concerns they may have about work-related fatigue

- avoid work arrangements that provide incentives to work excessive hours

• ensure clear work processes and effective planning e.g. plans to deal with workload changes due to absenteeism, staff on leave or seasonal work pressures

• consider alternate options to travelling to face-to-face meetings e.g. tele/video-conferencing (Skype)

• set up processes that enable the review of incidents, near misses, illnesses and other data such as absenteeism and staff turnover rates to see if they could be attributed to fatigue

4.2. Recommended working hours and breaks

There needs to be a flexible risk management approach, rather than a prescriptive approach, to managing fatigue as each person's health, lifestyle, job role and approach to work is different, and will change over time.

TechCompServices defines "ordinary hours" as being 38 hours/week, and all TechCompServices staff are aware that overtime must be approved in advance, however there will also be times when employees need to work longer hours than usual to meet a project deadline, drive long distances to sign up apprentices, or fly interstate to meetings.

For these circumstances, the following parameters are offered as a guide to help minimise the risk of fatigue-related injuries and illnesses.

4.2.1.   Each employee is responsible for taking adequate meal breaks and tea breaks. These are not considered a luxury, or even optional; it is important to stretch, rest the eyes, get some fresh air and something healthy to eat.

4.2.2.   There should be a minimum of 10 hours between the end of one day's work and the start of the next. This is important to allow enough time for a balanced life and to ensure adequate sleep.

4.2.3.   As a guide, an employee's daily normal work hours should not exceed 10 hours/day and 50 hours/week.

4.2.4.   For Site work an employee's daily work hours should not exceed 12 hours/day and 96 hours/shift, after which the shall have a 6 day break, unless approved by manager. When traveling to and from site total period including work and travel shall not exceed 14 hrs.

4.3. Long-distance driving

The dangers of driving whilst tired are well-documented and promoted in the media, as are the risks inherent in driving long distances. Work Safe Australia advises that any single journey of more than 500kms significantly increases the risk of fatigue-related incidents.

The following points are offered as a guide to help minimise the risk of fatigue-related car accidents and injuries whilst driving long distances:

• Have a good night's sleep before driving, so you can start fresh.

• Where possible, start your trip early in the day and avoid driving straight after you finish a day's work. It is particularly important to avoid driving during times you would usually be asleep.

• Shift the air control level to "fresh air" rather than "recycle", or the air will get stuffy. Opening a window will also help.

• Plan a 10-minute break or rest stop every two hours. Take advantage of designated rest areas to get out of the car and stretch.

• Watch for signs of fatigue. Drinking coffee, talking, listening to the radio or opening the window may help in the short-term but if you're tired, only sleep can improve your concentration. If you are really tired, pull over safely, set your phone alarm for 30 minutes, and have a nap.

Remember: Fatigue affects a person's health and wellbeing, increases the chance of illness, workplace injuries and car accidents occurring and reduces performance and productivity within the workplace. Managing these risks is a shared responsibility.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Workplace Health and Safety laws are designed to ensure the health and safety of everyone at the workplace.
5.2. TechCompServices has a duty to provide a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of employees. This includes ensuring that managers, supervisors and staff in general are well-informed about the risks associated with fatigue, and aware of effective and prompt actions to minimise those risks in the immediate and longer-term.
5.3. Each supervisor and manager also has a duty to be observant and protect the safety and wellbeing of all staff, particularly new employees.
5.4. Each employee has a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of others in the workplace. This includes the obligation to turn up for work in a state that enables them to conduct their business activities in a safe manner. Each employee also has a duty to follow policies and procedures, and cooperate fully with actions TechCompServices takes to comply with Workplace Health and Safety laws.

6. Breach of Policy

A breach of this policy & procedure may have unintended and harmful consequences. Breaches of this policy & procedure may lead to disciplinary action being taken, including dismissal in serious cases.

Related Documents:

CPOM.001 Workplace Health and Safety Policy
HSE.019 TCS Workplace Health and Safety Plan

Policy reviewed by Frank Hall, Approved by Jennifer Hall 13.04.2018