



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

HUMAN RESOURCES

FATIGUE POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fatigue is defined as a lack of energy and motivation that can be physical, mental or both. It is common place and most people will experience it at times without there being a medical problem. Fatigue can usually be relieved by rest.

Specifically, a fatigued person will be less alert, less able to process information, will have slower reaction times and less interest in working compared to a person who is not fatigued.

Fatigue can lead to poorer performance on tasks which require attention, decision making or high level of skill. Fatigue can lead to errors and accidents, ill health and injury, and reduced productivity. It is often a root cause of major accidents e.g. Herald of Free Enterprise, Chernobyl, Texas City, Clapham Junction, Challenger and Exxon Valdez.

2. EQUALITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and a commitment, to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services nor in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees and service users.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To give awareness and mitigation strategies in the management of fatigue in the workplace.

Objectives:

1. To identify the common causes of fatigue;
2. To identify the common symptoms of fatigue;
3. To define chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS);
4. To give personnel tools to be able to prevent fatigue;
5. To manage fatigue in safety critical work;
6. To manage fatigue specific to locally determined shift systems.

4. GUIDANCE

Common Causes of Fatigue

Normally fatigue would follow after a period of hard physical or mental activity and abnormal fatigue may result if this physical or mental activity was prolonged over many days.

There are certain conditions or factors that may cause an individual to experience fatigue more readily or that exacerbate the effects of fatigue. These include:

- Sleep disturbance, loss of sleep or poor-quality sleep
- Physical condition and level of fitness
- Certain medical conditions such as anaemia, diabetes, hypothyroidism, kidney or liver disease, cardiac problems
- Certain psychiatric conditions such as depression, anxiety, drug abuse, eating disorders, bereavement
- Types of diet
- Pregnancy
- Certain medications
- Working environment
- Infections.

Common Symptoms of Fatigue

An individual who is fatigued may experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Physical weakness
- Lack of energy
- Constantly tired
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Inability to see a task through to the end

In addition to the symptoms detailed above, Managers may recognise one or more of the following symptoms in individual who are fatigued:

- Slower reaction
- An increase in errors
- Lack of motivation or interest
- Being irritable
- Increase in time off for sickness

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

There are certain medical conditions that may cause fatigue that is long lasting and does not respond to normal rest. One such condition is known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). CFS can be prolonged and last over six months, the symptoms include:

- Malaise after exertion
- Impaired memory or concentration
- Sleep that does not result in feeling rested
- Muscle and/or joint pain
- Increase in time off for sickness
- Tender nodes in the neck or armpit
- Sore throat and/or headache

Preventing Fatigue

There are several ways that individuals can prevent the onset of excessive fatigue, these include:

- Techniques to aid relaxation and relieve stress, for example use of relaxation/stress audio media.
- Regular exercise to maintain a good level of fitness
- Management of life style to ensure periods of good quality rest
- Avoiding the consumption of excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol
- A suitable level of hydration and a good balanced diet
- If on medication, discuss any side effects with GP

Managing Fatigue in Safety Critical Work

Individuals must inform their Line Manager immediately if:

- They suffer from any of the above symptoms for a prolonged period
- If fatigue comes on suddenly
- If fatigue is not resolved with adequate rest or
- If fatigue is associated with another symptom, such as fainting

Consideration should also be given to seeking medical advice from their GP or in the first instance the Service Occupation Health Advisor.

Managers must ensure that employees under their management, whether individual or groups, who report for duty where they are clearly unfit due to fatigue, or who, through the course of their work become clearly unfit owing to fatigue, do not carry out or continue to carry out safety critical work.

If it is apparent that personnel on duty are not sufficiently rested to perform further operational activity there are a range of measures that are available to the management team.

Fatigue Management specific to locally determined Shift Systems

Individuals have a personal responsibility to ensure that they are sufficiently rested prior to the start of any forthcoming shift. Individuals must notify the Watch Manager at the start of the shift if there are concerns that they are not sufficiently rested or are unfit for duty.

Managers must take account of the need for personnel to take adequate rest during a duty period. The planning of training and routine work should be adapted during the shift to reflect the nature of any operational activity during that shift with the aim being to balance physical and non-physical activities accordingly.

Some courses attended during the course of a working period such as the Breathing Apparatus Refresher may place significant physical demands on those attending personnel. Managers must ensure that on return to station an appropriate rest and refreshment break is afforded to personnel before they commence normal work activities, taking into account the nature of activities undertaken on the course.

All managerial roles are responsible for monitoring the performance of crews at incidents and implementing control measures to manage fatigue when appropriate. This may include: rotation of crews, use of fire ground catering resources, taking refreshment/hydration breaks and the use of relief crews.

If it is apparent that personnel on duty are not sufficiently rested to perform further operational duties, there are several measures that are available to Managers to implement both individually and collectively. This includes:

- Increase stand down time;
- Rotation of crews allocated riding positions and duties;
- In extreme circumstances individual crews can be taken off the run and standbys can be utilised (GM Approval required)

If personnel feel that they are not sufficiently rested to travel safely following the end of a shift, then facilities for taking further rest before they travel at Service premises will be made available to them.

If anyone requires any further guidance / information relating to this document, please contact Human Resources