



Irregular or Unsocial Working Hours

Work Design

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- Limit irregular hours as much as possible.
- Notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any anticipated extra hours.
- Ensure time in lieu or recovery time is taken.

Shift work & long hours can lead to a lack of sleep, meaning a greater risk of health issues. The only way to recover from tiredness is to get enough sleep – remember, what you take out of the sleep bank, you must put back in. Good sleep is defined as normal sleep between 10.00pm and 6.00am in the morning.

Tips for Shift Workers - In the Workplace.

According to the Labour Department in New Zealand, there are 3 steps to managing workplace fatigue. All these steps rely on working with staff to create a safe and healthy working environment.

Consultation: Workers and employers should discuss what works for them.

Evaluation: Workers and employers should work out how to balance different needs.

Training & education: Information and training on how to manage unsocial hours and wellbeing some key areas of focus outlined below.

Employers Should:

- Make sure staff take regular rest breaks during shifts.
- Make food available to staff where appropriate.
- Provide good supervision of shifts.
- Be aware of the times when people are most likely to be affected by fatigue.
- Aim to manage shift work and overtime so that employees have regular opportunities for adequate recovery through high quality sleep.
- If possible, allow employees longer periods off if they must sleep during the day.
- Be alert for the contribution of fatigue in accident investigations. Support staff as far as possible (and ask staff about the best way to do this).

Employees should know about:

- What to eat and when.
- The impact of caffeine and alcohol on sleep.
- How to make the most of breaks.
- How to use recovery and rest time appropriately.
- How to adjust sleeping area to promote good sleep.
- How to recognise fatigue.
- Getting to and from work safely.
- The impact of exercise on fatigue.

Source: NZ Department of Labour, managing shift work to minimise workplace fatigue, A guide for small businesses