



PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to recognize the causes and risks of employee fatigue, the shared responsibility for managing fatigue properly, and the preventive actions that can be taken to both prevent fatigue and deal with its effects.

POLICY

Fatigue can be defined as an acute and ongoing state of tiredness that leads to mental and/or physical exhaustion and prevents people from functioning within normal boundaries. Fatigue can affect a person's health and wellbeing, increase the chance of illness and workplace injury, and reduce performance and productivity within the workplace. In the emergency response setting, fatigue has been linked to medical errors, poor decision-making, vehicle crashes, injuries, and other negative consequences.

Factors Leading to Fatigue in the Workplace

- Long periods of physical activity without a break
- Numerous emergency incidents and activities over an extended period of time
- A single physically/mentally demanding emergency incident
- Numerous emergency incidents during the night, resulting in multiple sleep disturbances
- Members working beyond their normal shift schedule
- Not getting adequate rest/sleep while off-duty

Signs/Symptoms of Fatigue

- Headache/dizziness
- Tiredness/sleepiness
- Muscle weakness
- Blurry vision
- Loss of appetite
- Constant yawning

Effects of Fatigue

- Slowed reflexes and responses
- Impaired decision-making and judgment
- Moodiness/irritability
- Impaired coordination
- Lack of concentration
- Reduced short-term memory
- Increased errors

Approved

Fire Chief



Fatigue Prevention

In order to prevent fatigue and to limit its effects, there are a number of preventive actions that members may take, these include:

- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle by engaging in daily exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy body weight, and not smoking
- Sleeping 6-8 hours per night, both on and off duty
- Maintaining regular sleep patterns by sleeping the same hours each night
- Using caffeine to maintain alertness in the acute setting (do not use to excess or in close proximity to bedtime)
- Taking naps when time permits (to avoid waking during deep stages of sleep, naps should either be less than 45 minutes or approximately 2 hours)

Recognition of Fatigue

All members of the department play a role in recognizing fatigue in both themselves and their co-workers by being aware of the signs/symptoms and effects of fatigue. It is the responsibility of all members who are experiencing signs or symptoms of fatigue to report it to their immediate supervisor. Additionally, members should report to their supervisor anytime they suspect that a fellow employee is suffering from the effects of fatigue. The Battalion Chief should be able to identify units with high utilization the previous day or units with multiple overnight calls. It is the responsibility of supervisors to monitor their personnel for signs of fatigue and to be alert for factors that may lead to fatigue. Members are allowed to occupy dorms from 2000 hours to 0630 hours. Members that do not receive at least 5 hours of sleep during this time period could see the effects of sleep deprivation and may need to utilize one of the methods for dealing with fatigue below. Members should be encouraged to get as much rest as reasonably possible during this time period.

Methods for Dealing with Fatigue

Once a member is suspected of suffering from the effects of fatigue, there are a number of measures that can be taken to limit and reverse the effects, they include:

- Allowing the member to take a nap
- Temporarily rotating the member to a slower unit
- Using caffeine in moderation to improve alertness
- In extreme cases of fatigue, the member may need to be temporarily removed from service and given a mandatory rest period before returning to work

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