

Fatigue: Verify Relief Before the Task

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Why this matters

Fatigue can reduce attention and judgment while the job still looks familiar. A useful plan makes relief and recovery possible before someone must choose between pushing through and leaving a task uncovered.

Objective: Verify a workable response when fatigue affects safe performance.

Key hazards or failure points

Extended or changing shifts; demanding work; missed recovery; heat or stress; no qualified relief; pressure to continue; an unsafe drive home.

Practical controls

- Review the actual schedule, workload and changes before safety-critical work. The employer arranges staffing, task sequence and recovery opportunities suited to the risks.
- Use a supportive, private reporting route for fatigue concerns. Pause affected exposure and arrange relief, reassignment or recovery through the employer's process.
- Include safe transportation when a person is too fatigued to drive. Coffee, determination or a short break cannot certify that someone is ready for hazardous work.

Verify It in the Field

Compare today's assignments and overtime with the planned coverage. Identify work that demands sustained attention and who can adjust it. Ask where breaks are difficult to take.

Name the qualified relief person and confirm availability when needed. Check the actual rest opportunity and safe task handoff. A break on a schedule is not effective if nobody can cover it.

Rehearse the private contact and the response to a fatigue report. Confirm a real safe waiting and transportation option if needed. Record work arrangements and follow-up, not diagnoses or private medical details.

Stop and reassess

Pause safety-critical work when alertness or coordination is impaired, relief is missing or the schedule defeats recovery. Make the task safe under its procedure and contact the responsible leader. Reassess before resuming; do not use driving or machinery operation as a fitness test.

Ask the crew

1. Where could today's schedule prevent recovery?
2. Who can safely take over this task?
3. What happens if someone cannot safely drive home?

Work-planning guidance; not a medical fitness assessment or hours-of-service rule.

Sources: NIOSH fatigue guidance; OSHA worker-fatigue prevention guidance.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/fatigue-work-scheduling-relief