



FATIGUE MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE	17-PP-002
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1. Purpose

MEGT recognises 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 and procedure (P&P) 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 MEGT employees including Apprentices and Trainees, Host Employers, contractors and visitors whilst at the workplace or whilst carrying out activities on behalf of MEGT, including:

- 2.1 Workers who undertake significant driving and travel as part of their roles.
- 2.2 Workers who work at host employers’ premises and other sites, including remote sites.
- 2.3 Workers and Host Employers who work and require overtime hours and who work multiple sites and jobs.
- 2.4 This includes Apprentices and Trainees who are qualified and complete, remaining on a casual basis for a short term with their host prior to becoming permanently appointed.

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
 - low energy levels
- 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. There are varied opinions regarding sleep debt. Generally, the only way to reduce or cancel a sleep debt is by sleeping additional hours within the debt affected term.

4. Policy

MEGT 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 acceptable standards 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. MEGT supports the following three-step risk management approach to fatigue which should also be undertaken in consultation with workplace health and safety representatives.

Refer to the Risk Management Policy & Procedure (11-PP-001) 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 great deal of travelling or driving
- working in more than one full and or part time position
- possible personal issues e.g. family responsibilities or health problems.

This can be done by consulting with employees, analysing work hours including the overtime report 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 (Eliminate and Administrative)** 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 MEGT workplaces and sites; others will be appropriate for a specific site, examples of controls to be implemented:

- 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, employees on leave or seasonal work pressures
- consider alternate options to travelling to face-to-face meetings e.g. tele/video-conferencing
- encourage employees/immediate families to use MEGT’s free Employee Assistance Program to talk with qualified counsellors about personal issues
- set up processes that enable the review of incidents, near misses, illnesses and other data such as overtime, multiple jobs, absenteeism and employee turnover rates to see if they could be attributed to fatigue
- manage environmental factors such as working in hot conditions
- manage physical work factors such as manual handling and repetitive tasks.

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.

MEGT’s Enterprise Agreement defines “ordinary hours” as being 38 hours/week between 7am and 8pm, and all MEGT employees 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 12 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 All employees should have two full days off after working 38 hours per week. Again, this is important to allow enough time for a balanced life and to ensure adequate sleep.
- 4.2.4 As a guide, an employee’s recommended weekly work hours should be 35 – 40 and not to exceed 48 – 56. Although working on weekends is sometimes necessary, it should not be ongoing. Fatigue causes an increased risk of injury and/or illness to the affected employee and to others in the workplace. In these cases, employees should speak with their supervisors/managers about other options for handling the workload. In accordance with the Group Training Arrangement, Host Employers should advise MEGT of proposed / planned overtime prior to the hours worked.

4.2.5 If a position requires a significant amount of travel, often outside of the 7am to 8pm timeframe, employees should discuss the issue with their supervisors/managers who may be able to arrange alternate solutions – e.g. time off in lieu, or approval for later/earlier flights – that also fit within MEGT’s Enterprise Agreement, Travel Policy and cost constraints. This is particularly relevant during periods of seasonal and peak workloads.

4.3 Long-distance driving

MEGT employs hundreds of people around Australia, some of whom drive long distances as part of their jobs, these may include apprentices/trainees working at host employers’ remote sites.

The dangers of driving whilst tired are well-documented and promoted in the media, as are the risks inherent in driving long distances. Safe Work 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. Whilst this cannot be substituted for sleep, it may assist.
- 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.
- As a general rule, employees should avoid driving more than 5 hours in a single day. Driving should not exceed eight hours in a single day.
- Watch for signs of fatigue. Drinking appropriate beverages such as water and healthy option mineral water or juice, or a coffee if that suits you, talking without distraction if you have passengers, 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 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 MEGT 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 employees 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 have a duty to be observant and protect the safety and wellbeing of all 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 present for work in a condition that enables them to conduct their business activities in a safe manner. Each employee also has a duty to follow policies



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and procedures and cooperate fully with actions MEGT and the Host Employer takes to comply with Workplace Health and Safety laws.

5.5 Host Employers also have a responsibility to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for their new apprentice, trainee and any MEGT employees who attend their workplace.

6. Relevant legislation & information

MEGT’s Fatigue Management Policy complies with all relevant State/Territory and Federal Acts and associated Regulations.

MEGT also acknowledges the following resource which has assisted in the development of this policy:

Guideline – RMS Operations – Fatigue Management Guideline 1-RMS-001-V2

Guide for Managing the Risk of Fatigue at Work (November 2013) Safe Work Australia

Employees who hold positions that require driving motor vehicles, including the use of pool cars, must complete the training provided by MEGT and Learning Seat – Fleet Safety 101.

Employees in this group must also refer to the Motor Vehicle Policy – 16-PP-001.

7. 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.

8. Document Review and Authorisation Details

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least every two years or earlier if required.

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