

We don't mean to skite, but we had a wonderful results from a year long state-wide stress prevention project that we ran in a medium sized enterprise. The project was sponsored by Vero Workers Compensation, and conducted with the assistance of co-trainer, Magaly Laurie, who specialises in adult education. The results were that over 70% of training participants

reported a reduction in stress levels as measured by the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale. Results also demonstrated that there was a

50% reduction in the number of trainees reporting clinically significant levels of depression, anxiety and stress. Vero indicated that there was a 74% reduction in stress claims over the project time frame, and this means very substantial savings to the customer's premiums.

We achieved this positive outcome through our policy of risk mitigation which works in theory as well as in practice. We based the training program and follow-up interventions on the most contemporary research on occupational stress in journals on applied psychology. We ensured the practicality of the training program by conducting preliminary job analyses, and intensively coaching participants with "on the job" implementation of training.



Fatigue and why it's worth every ones' while to get enough rest

Employer Responsibilities

Who can say that they don't want more sleep and rest? As an employer, it is worth your while making necessary changes to ensure that your workers get enough sleep. Internet reports on cases such as Inspector Stephen Campbell v James Gordon Hitchcock [2003] tests the admissibility of certain evidence with regard to the proposition that an employer can be prosecuted under s15 and s50(1) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983. Workcover Authority is pursuing the prosecutions following a fatal road accident in September 1999 near Tyndale NSW. Tragically the driver of one of the semi-trailers was killed, and the other driver of a semi-trailer suffered injuries. It is being alleged that the driver had used amphetamines and gone without sleep for a number of days. These propositions are yet to be conclusively upheld or overturned.

Workcover Authority is alleging that the employer:

- a) Failed to ensure that long haul truck drivers in its employ took sufficient rest stops whilst they were driving to counter fatigue, lack of alertness or drowsy driving.
- b) Failed to ensure that driving rosters were prepared which properly or adequately took into account the effect of fatigue and sleep deprivation in respect of the conduct of the employer's undertaking of road freight haulage.
- c) Failed to ensure that driving hours of employees were properly recorded and audited to minimise the risk to employees of the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation in respect of long haul truck driving.
- d) Failed to adequately warn employees of the hazards of fatigue involved in long haul truck driving.
- e) Failed to adequately warn employees of the hazards of taking drugs to counter fatigue whilst involved in long haul truck driving.

Fatigue to Energy

f) Failed to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision of its employees as may be necessary to ensure the health and safety of persons other than its employees in the conduct of the employer's undertaking while they were at its place of work.

g) Failed to provide a safe system of work to minimise the risk to employees of the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation in respect of long haul truck driving.

In cases such as Workcover Authority of New South Wales (Inspector Maurice Vierow) v Rail Infrastructure Corporation. [2003] the employer received a 30% discount of \$72,000 on a \$240,000 fine. This discount was awarded because Rail Infrastructure Corporation had made substantial efforts to improve their safety culture. One of the initiatives that the IRC drew attention to was the implementation of fatigue management training, with an educating employees about fatigue, drugs and alcohol, (Lawlink NSW).

As an employee it is worth your while to manage fatigue because it obviously has a huge impact on your safety at home and at work. A substantial number of road accidents have come about because the driver failed to rest. It is simply not worth your while pushing yourself without having proper rest breaks and taking your annual leave when it is due.

Disclaimer The material contained herein is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist of strategies to resolve fatigue. This newsletter provides general advice only and does not constitute a prescription for a specific workplace or circumstances. The material is reproduced with the permission of the Attorney General's Department and is edited by Mr Peter Axelrod (Lecturer for NSW Law Society).

Workcover authority

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employer failed to warn

employees about the

hazards of fatigue and

substance abuse during

long haul driving.

It costs you, and it can cost your family, in terms of quality of life.

How do you get better sleep?

It is all about routine, having a set time for waking and going to bed, and avoiding doing anything that is going to make you anxious before you go to bed. This means not paying bills, not listening to work voice mails or checking emails, and not having difficult conversations late at night.

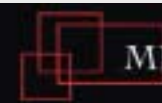
If you are a night shift worker this is going to be difficult, because the body is attuned to do its best sleeping at night. However you can still help yourself by making sure that your bedroom has black out curtains to keep the light out, and is kept at the right temperature for sleeping: 17 to 21 degrees is the optimum temperature range to help you fall asleep.

Regular exercise in the morning or afternoon is helpful in making sure that you are tired enough to fall asleep. Exercise is also helpful in managing stress, depression and anxiety, which are other reasons that peoples' sleep can be disturbed.

If you are interested in learning more about how to improve fatigue management for your work force, call MKA Risk Mitigation for a free half hour initial consultation.

Future Topics

- Creating positive, performing, professional workplace cultures
- Inspired Performance Management
- A Drug Free Workplace
- Adventurous workplaces without risk
- Positive Mental Health at Work
- Goodbye Chronic Pain
- Mediation that Works
- Safety Culture Plus



MKA: Risk Mitigation

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