

1. Purpose

McFour 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 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 McFour employees, contractors, and visitors whilst at the workplace or whilst carrying out activities on behalf of McFour, including:

2.1 - Workers who undertake significant driving as part of their roles.

2.2 - Workers who undertake significant travel as part of their roles.

2.3 - Workers who work at host employers' premises and other sites, particularly remote sites requiring lengthy drives on country roads.

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. Occupational Health 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
- lacking energy

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. The only way to reduce or cancel a sleep debt is by sleeping additional hours.

4. Policy

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

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 lot of travelling or driving
- possible personal issues e.g., family responsibilities or health problems. This can be done by consulting with employees, analysing work hours 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** 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, e.g. relevant to all McFour workplaces and sites; others will be appropriate for a specific site, examples of controls to be implement:

- 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, staff on leave or seasonal work pressures
- consider alternate options to travelling to face-to-face meetings e.g., tele/video conferencing (Skype/ Zoom/Teams)
- set up processes that enable the review of incidents, near misses, illnesses, and other data such as absenteeism and staff turnover rates to see if they could be attributed to fatigue

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.

McFour's Staff Agreement defines "ordinary hours" as being 42.5 hours/week between 7am and 8pm, and all McFour staff 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 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 >42.5hrs. 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 daily work hours should not exceed 10 hours/day and 50 hours/week. This equates to an average of 200 hours/month and 600 hours over three months.

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, staff should speak with their supervisors/managers about other options for handling the workload.

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 - that also fit within McFour's Staff Agreement, Travel Policy, and cost constraints. This is particularly relevant during periods of seasonal and peak workloads.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 - Workplace Health and Safety laws are designed to ensure the health and safety of everyone at the workplace.

5.2 - McFour 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 staff 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 staff, particularly new 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 turn up for work in a state that enables them to conduct their business activities in a safe manner. Each employee also has a duty to follow policies and procedures and cooperate fully with actions McFour takes to comply with Workplace Health and Safety laws.

Signed: 

Date 01/02/2023

Mr Martin McDermott, Managing Director