



## HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE SHIFT WORK AND FATIGUE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has recently published new guidance called 'Managing Shift Work' that aims to improve the understanding of shift-work and its impact on Health and Safety.

This new guidance is particularly useful for employers, safety representatives, trade union officials, employees, regulators and other stakeholders. It aims to help them tackle issues such as risk assessments, shift-work schedules, and advice on controlling, managing and monitoring the risks of shift work.

By drawing together advice and best practice from a range of sources, the guide explains employers' legal duties and the risks associated with shift-work and describes the impact shift-work can have on health and safety.

Following research, the HSE reports that there can be undesirable consequences for those working shifts, particularly night and early morning shifts. These include disruption of the internal body clock, sleeping difficulties and fatigue, which in turn can affect performance, increase the likelihood of errors and accidents at work and may affect the health and well-being in the long term.

The HSE advise that there is no specific health and safety legislation on shift working in the UK but employers have general health and safety responsibilities (e.g. a duty of care in law) for their employees (and others). This duty includes removing or controlling the risks of fatigue by properly organising and planning shift-working arrangements. Employers' broader responsibility for the health and safety of others (e.g. the public) that might be affected by their work activities provides another reason why it is important to control fatigue.

All the key risk factors involved with assessing and managing shift work are covered in detail in the HSE guidance 'Managing Shift Work'.

Copies of Managing Shift Work: Health and Safety Guidance, (HSG 256) ISBN 0 7176 6197 0, priced £9.95 are available from HSE books and other good booksellers.

The HSE has also developed the Fatigue and Risk Index, a free assessment tool, which can be used to compare alternative patterns and help identify whether any particular aspects of an existing or proposed working time pattern are likely to increase the risk of fatigue.

More information is available via the HSE Website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/shiftwork/index.htm>

Please contact Joanna Hancock at BFFF on 01476 515300 or via [joannahancock@bfff.co.uk](mailto:joannahancock@bfff.co.uk) if you would like to discuss this or any aspect of Health & Safety in more detail.

**BFFF**  
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