

Information Bulletin

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Fatigue Management

What is driver fatigue?

Driver fatigue, or tiredness, is a general term used to describe the experience of being “sleepy”, “tired” or “exhausted”. Symptoms include restlessness, boredom, inability to maintain a steady speed and sore or tired eyes. Fatigue is not just a problem for drivers on long trips as any drivers can also suffer from fatigue even on short trips.

The effect of fatigue is both a physiological and a psychological experience and can severely impair judgement when driving. Driver fatigue can cause lapses in concentration which could prove fatal.

Fatigue is involved in up to 30 per cent of fatal crashes and up to 15 per cent of serious injuries requiring hospital treatment. Being awake for more than 17 hours is similar to having more than two standard drinks and having a blood alcohol content of more than 0.05.

The problem with fatigue is that it slowly develops and drivers often do not realise they're too tired to drive safely. Drivers must learn to recognise the warning signs and take a break before it is too late.

Legislative requirements

Under section 10 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010* (the Standard), a driver of a public passenger vehicle must not operate a vehicle while fatigued.

Section 21 of the Standard imposes a requirement on operators of a public passenger services to take reasonable steps to ensure that each driver complies with the fatigue management requirements.

If a driver operates a vehicle or a combination with a gross vehicle mass of more than 12 tonne or a bus that can carry more than 12 adults (including the driver) they must also comply with the requirements of the *Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012*.

This national legislation came into effect on 1 October 2013 and is managed by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The new laws introduced some changes which bring Queensland in line with the other participating jurisdictions, reducing confusion for drivers

The general duty on all parties under the Chain of Responsibility laws to take reasonable steps to ensure road transport laws are complied with and to manage driver fatigue remain unchanged under the new national laws.

This information bulletin provides suggestions for both drivers and operators on how to identify and prevent driver fatigue. This information bulletin is intended as a guideline only and may not be taken as a point of law.

Additional information about managing heavy vehicle driver fatigue may be found on the Department of Transport and Main Roads' website at www.tmr.qld.gov.au or on the National heavy Vehicle Regulator's website at www.nhvr.gov.au.

Causes of fatigue

- Inadequate amount or quality of sleep over an extended period.
- Sustained mental or physical effort.
- Disruption of the normal cycles of daytime activity and night sleep.
- Environmental stresses during sleep (such as light, heat and noise).
- Medication (some medications cause drowsiness).
- Diagnosed or undiagnosed sleep disorders (sleep apnoea, insomnia and narcolepsy).
- Obesity/bad dietary habits.
- Night work (causes sleep implications as daytime sleep is less restorative than nocturnal sleep).
- Workload and lifestyle choices (illness, childcare, sport, socialising, studying).

How to identify fatigue

- Repeated yawning.
- Loss of attentiveness.
- Slower reaction times.
- Impaired judgement.
- Feelings of drowsiness or tiredness.
- Reduced alertness.
- Sore, red and tired eyes.
- Dim or fuzzy vision.
- Droning or humming in ears.
- Wandering or disconnected thoughts.
- Mood swings (feeling irritable and restless).
- Daydreaming.
- Muscle stiffness and cramps.
- Difficulty in keeping your head up or eyes open.
- Your driving speed creeps up or down.
- You find it difficult to maintain your lane position when driving.

How to prevent fatigue

FOR DRIVERS:

In-vehicle fatigue management strategies –

- Stop regularly, at least once every two hours and take short breaks. Walk around for a while, exercise and breathe deeply.
- Counteract fatigue with regular healthy food and drink. High protein and low glycaemic index (GI) foods are best, for example, a salmon sandwich on wholegrain bread. (Avoid excessive consumption of high calorie, high fat and high GI foods such as thick shakes as these can make you drowsy).
- Carry plenty of drinking water in the vehicle.
- Wear sunglasses when driving to minimise glare.
- Do not exceed the maximum driving periods specified by legislation.
- Check what prescription medicines you are taking - some can affect your alertness or cause drowsiness. Check with your pharmacist or doctor.

General fatigue management strategies -

- Ensure adequate sleep (minimum six consecutive hours in a single 24 hour period, however the average required on a sustained basis is about seven to eight hours).
- Set up conditions at home (and the vehicle) so you can get as much sleep as possible. (Reduce noise, light and disturbances).
- Enlist family support for a peaceful environment when sleeping (particularly when sleeping in daylight).
- Stress management (work related and personal stress).
- Improve general health and fitness. Exercise. Avoid being overweight.
- Have regular health checks. Ensure that you do not have a sleep disorder or other medical conditions that could affect your driving ability.
- Check what prescription medicines you are taking - some can affect your alertness or cause drowsiness. Check with your pharmacist or doctor.

FOR OPERATORS:

General fatigue management strategies for your staff -

- Control and monitor shifts to minimise driver fatigue. (Drivers must work to the regulated work and rest arrangements).
- Reduce or eliminate irregular shift patterns. The impact of fatigue is greater for drivers with irregular shift patterns.
- Incorporate short breaks in shifts.
- Arrange the driver's roster to maximise the opportunity to recover from the effects or onset of fatigue.
- Encourage health and fitness of drivers.
- Provide information to promote driver health.
- Be aware if drivers have a second job.
- Does the driver's lifestyle contribute to fatigue (sporting commitments, study commitments, new parent or illness)? For example, a full day of study followed by a work shift, is very tiring as it is the number of hours a driver has been awake not just the length of the shift, that contributes to fatigue.

Consider the questions below to assist you in managing your drivers' fatigue.

- 1. Scheduling and rostering** – the scheduling of trips should allow for drivers to take adequate rest breaks and provide drivers with the flexibility to manage their fatigue.
 - a. Do you consider fatigue management measures when rostering drivers?
 - b. Do you allow sufficient time for drivers to take adequate breaks?
 - c. Are drivers provided with sufficient days off to recover from the cumulative effects of fatigue caused by extended periods of work?
 - d. Are drivers regularly asked to drive during the peak fatigue times, namely 2pm - 4pm and 10pm - 6am?
 - e. Do drivers ensure that they consider the impact of activities such as recreational activities and personal life on their well-being and capacity to work safely
 - f. Are drivers using time off responsibly to prepare for/recover from the fatigue effects of work?

2. Training and education – all personnel should be provided with training on the prevention of fatigue.

- a. Are drivers and management provided with training and education on fatigue management issues?
- b. Are drivers given a copy of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland “Managing fatigue: a guide for the workplace”?
- c. Do drivers/management have the knowledge and skills to practise effective fatigue management?
- d. Are drivers/management tested on their knowledge of fatigue management (for example, by a quiz?)
- e. Is the fatigue management training revisited on a periodic basis?
- f. Has a formal fatigue management program been developed that caters for the needs of your organisation?
- g. Are drivers provided with information on their Occupational Health and Safety responsibilities?
- h. Does management actively encourage fatigue management training?
- i. Do management initiate contact with the driver to monitor fatigue?

3. New drivers – induction program

- a. Are new drivers provided with fatigue management training?
- b. Are new drivers given a copy of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland “Managing fatigue: a guide for the workplace”?

Additional information

The information contained in this bulletin has been produced as a guide to assist in the understanding of the legislation and policy. Clarification of any information in this bulletin may be obtained from the Department of Transport and Main Roads by contacting your local Passenger Transport office of the Department.

This bulletin is an interpretation of the relevant Acts, Regulations and Standard and should not be used as a reference to a point of law.

Copies of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994*, *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 2018* and *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010* can be purchased from LitSupport Pty Ltd on 07 3223 9202 or email legislation@litsupport.com.au.

The legislation may be viewed on the internet at www.legislation.qld.gov.au. Additional information about public passenger services is available on the Department of Transport and Main Roads internet site at www.tmr.qld.gov.au.