

FATIGUE: Manage people, not compliance



Fatigue is more than just tiredness. And it's far more dangerous. It can affect:



How well you **drive**



Your **alertness**



How well you **operate machinery**



Your ability to perform **mental tasks**



How well you respond to **problems on the road**

38% of crashes where a truck driver dies are **fatigue-related**

It's a severe problem, and fatigue causes more truck driver deaths than any other cause. Here's what you need to know.



Sleep

5 hours of sleep ≈ 0.05 blood alcohol

You need quality as well as quantity of sleep. Contributors to poor-quality sleep include:



Caffeine: can interfere with how well you get to sleep.



Alcohol: can help you get to sleep but disturbs your quality of sleep.



Obesity: contributes to difficulty sleeping.



Stress: poor mental health can cause problems in getting to sleep and disrupting your sleep.



Fatigue

4 signs of fatigue

Here are some signs that you may be fatigued, not just a bit tired:



Constantly tired: feeling like you need to sleep or always wanting an afternoon nap.



Sleep inertia: feeling slow or sluggish even after you've been up for a while.



Gut problems: feeling 'off' in the stomach or bowels.



Mental sharpness: feeling like you're not working well or are constantly forgetting where you put things.

Take a whole-of-person approach

Fatigue is a whole-of-life problem, so managing it requires a whole-of-life approach:



Compliance isn't enough: filling in work diaries, meeting required minimum rest times, and maximum drive times is a starting point, not the end goal.



Look beyond work: stay attuned to your drivers' life events like new children, care responsibilities, even holidays and house moves.



Conversations are critical: have regular conversations with your team; make them positive and constructive, focusing on health and safety.

Managing fatigue

The key to managing fatigue is prevention. You can look at:



Work structures:

Review simple, structural components, such as shift length and the time between shifts. Find flexibility where you can to give your drivers the best opportunity for high-quality sleep.



Sleep support:

Give people access to support if they're having problems with their sleep. Therapy and counselling work better than sleeping tablets, so facilitating access or supporting that financially can be helpful.



Lifestyle:

Provide access and encourage lifestyle aspects of access to exercise, discourage smoking and point out the dangers of binge drinking.



Life events:

Understand that people with caring duties, young children, or unwell partners can all have problems with their sleep.

You don't need to become your drivers' best mate, nor do you need to become their life coach.

But if your drivers feel comfortable discussing issues in their life that could be impacting their sleep, you'll be able to take a holistic approach to managing them and their fatigue.