

# SURVIVAL TIPS

Suggestions to keep you healthy and free of injury

## Shiftwork

**Many experts blame rotating shifts for the human error often associated with accidents, air crashes and other disasters. Chronic fatigue can lead to feelings similar to jet lag and may be a significant hazard in your workplace.**

**You have the right to know.** Your employer must inform you of all significant hazards in your work environment, and involve employees in developing shiftwork procedures to minimise them. Your employer should have strategies in place to minimise the injury risk from sleep deprivation, and other problems associated with shiftwork.

### **Tip 1: Adjusting to Shiftwork**

Employers' obligations include:

- Designing work rosters and programmes to lessen physical and psychological stress.
- Managing the change to shiftwork to help accommodate your lifestyle.
- Minimising harm to your health, work performance and quality of life.

### **Tip 2: Safety Concerns** **Be aware that:**

- Lack of sleep may lead to a decline in performance and concentration.
- Chronic fatigue may

cause falling asleep on the job.

- Job performance changes with the time of day. Judgement can be impaired, especially between 2.30 - 5.30 am.
- Shiftworkers should not work alone if there is potential for injury.

### **Tip 3: Sleep**

Shiftworkers are 60% more likely to suffer sleep disorders, so:

- Do not use sleeping pills as they induce abnormal sleep and may be addictive.
- Use sound insulation on doors and windows.
- Avoid caffeine [coffee or cola drinks] in the hours before sleeping.
- Ask family and neighbours to reduce noise.

### **Tip 4: Diet & Meals**

- Maintain regular eating patterns, with meals at the same times.
- Drink lots of water and eat balanced meals, including vegetables, fruit, lean meat, dairy products and bread. No protein before sleeping.

### **Tip 5: Alcohol**

- Drinking alcohol before bed may disturb your sleep and require you to wake for toilet visits.

### **Tip 6: Family**

- Try to maintain social interaction with family and friends.

- Plan at least one family meal each day.
- Avoid social isolation.

### **Tip 7: Health and Shiftwork**

- Employees should have access to medical checks and advice on healthcare.
- If you are on regular medication (e.g. insulin for diabetes), or have a chronic condition (e.g. asthma, epilepsy), discuss shiftwork with your doctor.

### **Tip 8: Exercise**

- Increase physical activity during leisure time; join a gym or sports club, walk or cycle.

### **Tip 9: Reducing Stress**

- Shiftwork may raise stress levels and affect relationships.
- If problems occur with domestic and social life or with adjusting to shiftwork, discuss it with your supervisor, fellow employees, H&S representative, occupational health nurse, doctor, counsellor or EAP service.

**Disclaimer:** these survival tips are general in nature and are not intended to be comprehensive. Always take into account your own particular circumstances. If you have any questions, please discuss them with your supervisor.

*These survival tips supplied by the New Zealand Safety Council, [www.safetycouncil.org.nz](http://www.safetycouncil.org.nz) or email [info@safetycouncil.org.nz](mailto:info@safetycouncil.org.nz)*