Fatigue Checklist

Workers suffering from fatigue—physical and mental—are not only less productive and more prone to illness but also more distracted and thus more likely to be involved in a safety incident.

Fatigue can be broadly defined as a feeling of weariness, tiredness or lack of energy. Fatigue is a common complaint but, medically speaking, it's recognized more as a symptom or cause of other conditions than as a condition itself. The best way to understand fatigue is along a continuum. On one end of the spectrum is the fatigue that most of us occasionally experience in the course of our lives when we get physically or mentally overburdened. This kind of fatigue isn't serious and can usually be resolved simply and quickly, such as by getting extra rest. On the other end is a less common but more serious form of fatigue that's symptomatic of a more chronic and disabling condition, such as major depressive disorder or chronic fatigue syndrome. This form of fatigue is an acute and/or ongoing state of tiredness that leads to mental or physical exhaustion and prevents people from functioning as usual.

Fatigue clearly impairs work ability. Studies have shown that workers with fatigue are significantly more likely to miss work and experience long-term work absences than workers without fatigue

Bottom line: It is estimated that workers with fatigue cost U.S. employers $136.4 billion a year in health-related lost productivity time $101 billion more than workers without fatigue.

PREVENTION
Conduct a **fitness for work assessment**.
It includes the following:

Observation

- An employee must observe and communicate with workers to ensure they are fit and able to carry out the requirements of their roles and responsibilities.

Look Out for the Symptoms of Fatigue

Train your managers and supervisors to recognize the signs of fatigued workers, including:

- excessive yawning;
- irritability;
- bloodshot eyes;
- poor performance;
- lack of focus

If you have identified any fatigued workers in your workplace, discuss the issue of fatigue with them as soon as practicable. You may also choose to discuss the issue with other workers who could be at risk of fatigue.

Direct a worker to take leave

Following discussion with a fatigued worker, you may:

- direct a worker to take paid personal or annual leave if they have any paid leave entitlements;
- allow a worker to take unpaid leave if they wish to do so; or
- choose to grant a worker paid leave if they have exhausted all of their leave entitlements.

It’s also recommended that you include a clause in your workers’ employment contracts that states that you reserve the right to send a worker home from work if you believe that the worker is not fit to perform their duties.

Driving while fatigued could be dangerous, so if you decide to send a fatigued worker home, arrange a safe method of travel for them, e.g. a taxi or colleague, and check that they have arrived home safely.