



# Weekly Safety Tip

## *Fatigue Harms Bottom Line*



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#### How Worker Fatigue Harms the Bottom Line

*Studies show that an overworked and overtired workforce will ultimately cost the company money.*

**Attribution:** article in **EHS Today**, 05/09/23 by **Rick Tobin**



Safety practitioners need to be aware of the dangers of workplace fatigue and inform management of the economic impact of driving workers too hard.

Here is some solid evidence to support making that argument in two studies published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (JOEM):

The first is on the relationship between fatigue and health-related lost productive time.

The other links weekly work schedules of 60 or more hours to health & safety problems.

#### Fatigue in the Workforce

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. For example, studies show that ***fatigued workers are more than twice as likely to experience health-related lost productive time.***

***One study found that 37.9% of U.S. workers experience fatigue, costing companies approximately \$136 billion in lost productivity.***

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. At 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. But there were no studies on the prevalence of fatigue within the workforce (at least in the U.S.) and how fatigue affected productive work time.

# **Weekly Safety Share**



*Supporting Worker Mental Health: New  
Videos from OSHA*



## Supporting Worker Mental Health: New videos from OSHA



Here are three new videos from OSHA aimed at helping employers support worker mental health. You can access each of the brief videos via their titled hyperlinks below:

- [Start the Conversation](#)
- [Tips to Improving Work Relationships](#)
- [Build Your Mental Health Toolkit](#)

"Mental health touches every aspect of our lives, from the way we make decisions, from how we interact with other people, and also our performance," Joseph Xavier, senior director of safety for Associated Builders and Contractors, says in one of the videos.

Employees who are experiencing mental health issues may show up to work late or impaired, be distracted on the job, and/or isolate themselves from their co-workers.

Regularly asking workers how they and their families are doing can build a one-on-one relationship and, in some cases, get to the root cause of workplace incidents.

Along with [NIOSH's Total Worker Health Program](#), mental health resources such as [ABC's Total Human Health Toolkit](#) can guide employers and assist workers.

**The toolkit includes a human health assessment tool;** resources to engage workers during Suicide Prevention Month (observed each September); and 12 different worker-focused webpages and printable documents that cover active listening tips, how to upgrade a work-from-home routine and understanding depression.

OSHA published the videos during [Safe + Sound Week](#) (Aug. 7-13), which emphasized the importance of addressing mental health as part of every workplace safety and health program.

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