Fatigue is a state of mental or physical exhaustion that reduces your ability to work safely and effectively. Fatigue can be work related or non-work related or a combination of both and can build up over time. This can lead to workplace incidents and injuries.

**Why run a Fatigue Management Toolbox Talk?**

* Who’s responsible for fatigue management
* Signs of fatigue
* Causes of fatigue
* How to manage fatigue

**Who’s Responsible for Fatigue Management**

Both employers and employees are responsible for managing fatigue. Worker engagement on this issue is a good way to raise concerns, make suggestions and ask questions.

**Signs of fatigue**

The effects of fatigue can be short term, or they could be long term (burnout). Signs a person may be experiencing fatigue are:

* Short-term memory problems and finding it hard to concentrate
* Poor decision making or errors in judgment
* Reduced hand-eye coordination or slow reflexes
* Mood swings
* Trouble solving problems
* Job performance is affected
* Trouble focusing
* Unable to recall last thought or conversation

**Causes of Fatigue**

* Shift work
* Working long hours
* Sleep disruption
* Environmental factors – climate
* Physical work factors – using tools that vibrate and type of work i.e. heavy labour
* Repetitive work
* Mental work demands - tasks that require intense concentration,  regular criticism, or pressure to meet deadlines
* Excessive commuting
* Non-work-related events – separation of a partner, loss of a loved one

**How to Manage Fatigue**

Some ways to manage fatigue are:

* Appropriate rest breaks
* Using machinery to assist with tasks – where appropriate
* Appropriate human resources
* Avoid working in extreme climate
* Drink enough fluids to maintain hydration
* Job rotations
* Ensure you regularly get 7-8 hours’ sleep before starting work
* Do not rely on stimulants – coffee and nicotine only provide a temporary boost
* Diet - Eat a balanced diet with foods that provide slow-release energy (e.g. wholegrains)

**Key takeaways:**

* *Fatigue is a hazard in the workplace*
* *Look after yourself*
* *Engage with your work colleagues and employers*