

Media Release

Managing fatigue risk through sleep

The management of fatigue risk is a priority for safety managers across many industries and Jim Huemmer of Shiftwork Solutions looks at how sleep is a key contributor.

Managing workplace fatigue and risk is a broad area that needs to be properly evaluated based on site specific conditions. For example, not all workers require the same amount of sleep to be fully alert the next day. Many individuals require seven to eight hours to be fully alert, others require more hours of sleep and some can get by with less. Key strategies for achieving acceptable levels of risk in the workplace include: optimal roster design (planned hours of work), employee education, and the management of actual hours of work.

Shiftwork Solutions has worked with over 23,000 shift workers from a breadth of industries and over 200 operating sites. They have over one million responses from workers about their sleep, fatigue, hours of work and time off. This data, when compared to findings from site, is useful for evaluating alertness in the workplace and designing rosters that better meet business needs, employee needs and health/safety needs.

Shiftwork Solutions Director Jim Huemmer said this data has taken over 17 years to collect, but it provides an excellent insight into the relationship between hours of work, sleep and fatigue.

“A large part of my career has been dedicated to working with shift workers and improving health, alertness and safety,” Mr Huemmer said.

“While factors such as age, health, diet and lifestyle choices are all important for safety, these factors are ultimately not ones that organisations and managers can control, while rosters and actual hours of work can be tailored to an organisation and its workforce.”

“Opportunities for sleep, the hours of work (per day and per work cycle), shift rotations, breaks between shifts and work cycles, all need to be evaluated when designing optimal rosters.”

“In our experience, rosters that try to use a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach will fail or will not fully address business, employee, and health and safety requirements for the site.”

Shiftwork Solutions is a specialist company with a proven track record in optimising shifts and rosters to better enable organisations to balance people, resources and safety. Shiftwork Solutions offers proven processes, tailored to organisational needs and engage all parties to implement.

They specialise in roster optimisation for all organisations including mining, transport, energy, manufacturing and government.

Jim Huemmer has over 23 years experience in optimising rosters, sleep and safety.