CrewSigned

Fatigue Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Being tired on the job is more dangerous than most people think. Fatigue slows your reaction time, hurts your judgment, and makes you miss things you would normally catch. It also makes you a worse judge of how tired you are. Research shows that after seventeen hours awake, your reaction is about as impaired as someone with a blood alcohol level of 0.05. After twenty-four hours awake, it is like 0.10, which is over the legal limit to drive.

Fatigue comes from not getting enough sleep, from long shifts and overtime, from working nights or rotating shifts, and from hard physical work in heat or cold. It builds up over days. A couple of short nights in a row add up to a sleep debt, and one long night in bed does not fully pay it back. Most adults need seven to nine hours of sleep, and a lot of workers get less than seven.

The time of day matters too. Your body wants to sleep in the early morning hours, roughly between two and six, and again in the middle of the afternoon. That is when tired people make mistakes and drowsy drivers drift off the road.

Watch for the signs in yourself: yawning, heavy eyelids, trouble focusing, forgetting things, getting irritable, or missing a step in a task you know well. Microsleeps are short moments where your brain switches off for a second or two, even with your eyes open. At highway speed, that is long enough to cross into another lane.

Here is what you can do. Protect your sleep. Keep a regular bedtime, keep the room dark and cool, and put the phone down. Go easy on caffeine late in the day and skip alcohol before bed. Eat real food and drink water during the shift. Use your breaks.

On the job, if you are too tired to work safely, tell me. We can change tasks or take a break, and that is better than an injury. Look out for each other and speak up if a coworker is nodding off.

Driving home after a long shift is one of the riskiest parts of the day. If you are fighting to stay awake, do not drive. Take a nap first, or get a ride.

Discussion questions

1. How many hours of sleep did you get last night, and is that normal for you?
2. When during the shift do you feel most tired, and what tasks are we doing then?
3. What should someone do if they feel too tired to drive home after a long shift?

OSHA standard

OSHA Worker Fatigue guidance
https://www.osha.gov/worker-fatigue

SOURCES

NIOSH, Fatigue and Work: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fatigue/about/index.html
NIOSH, Driver Fatigue on the Job: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/motor-vehicle/driver-fatigue/index.html

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC
Fatigue Toolbox Talk

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JOB / SITE

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TIME

PRESENTER

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