



Fatigue at Risk Management

Fatigue at Risk Management (FARM) is as simple as finding out what makes us over tired and coming up with ways to get more rest to be our best selves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, scheduling sleep may be challenge.

Affects of Fatigue

Fatigue is as much or even more of a hazard like chemicals, farm machinery, silos, grain bins, manure pits, power tools, animal handling, etc... Fatigue can result in slower reaction time, lack of good judgement, being more easily distracted, not being able to concentrate on tasks, and the work may not be of the same quality as usual.

Fatigue can also affect physical and mental health. Physically, fatigue can cause various medical conditions including heart, liver or kidney disease, infections, and decreased immune system function.

Mentally, fatigue can impair thinking and emotional regulation, and amplify psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Fatigue, according to the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) Guide, is the body's response to sleep loss or prolonged physical and/or mental exertion. Fatigue can be caused by irregular work shifts, working during normal sleeping hours, and working prolonged hours over a significant period of time. Surely with the labour shortages and delay in the arrival of the temporary foreign workers, this is relatable.

Cause of Fatigue

Evaluate the farm to determine the potential and actual causes of fatigue. Are you doing much more with much less on the farm in this pandemic? Determine the risk fatigue may have on your operations which could lead to incident and injury as well as the detrimental effects sleep deprivation can have on your own health. Start with drafting a policy to address fatigue on the farm and outline a procedure on how to handle fatigue. Is it possible to do the demanding farm work differently? Determine what hazard controls can be implemented to mitigate the risk of fatigue such as spreading out the workload, adjust scheduling, train on the signs and symptoms of fatigue and sleep disorders that may cause fatigue, change the work environment or rotate workers through various environments to reduce exposure to noise and vibration, and create a monitoring program to check workers for levels of fatigue. Leave non-essential work until later. Is it possible to hire two part-time workers rather than over extend one full-time worker? Check in with other farmers to see how they are operating and share ideas? Can you help each other out?

Asking for Help

Don't be afraid to ask for help? Not asking for help is a badge of honor you can give up for your mental and physical health on the farm. You may prefer to use resources like the Farm Family Support Center (1-844-880-9142) where what is discussed is confidential and they can provide you guidance on what you need the help with the most.

Developing a Plan to Mitigate the Hazard

Have a process in place where workers are encouraged to bring forward how they are feeling to help determine if they are fit for work.

Include an incident report which speaks to fatigue as being a possible cause of an incident or injury. The incident report form can highlight the role fatigue played in the illness or incident, what led up to the worker being fatigued, and how and if a fatigue at risk management plan could have mitigated the situation.



Maintain your health and wellness by implementing a fatigue at risk management program. Visit <https://farmsafetyns.ca/fatigue-at-risk-management-program/> to access resources that can help you put a fatigue at risk management program together.