Worker Fatigue

Although the National Sleep Foundation recommends that healthy adults sleep 7–9 hours per day, a recent Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study found that 30.0% of adults workers in the US—about 40.6 million workers—reported sleeping an average of 6 or less hours per day.  

Source: CDC

**Percentage of US Workers Who Reported Sleeping 6 or Less Hours a Day by Industry**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and warehousing</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare and social assistance</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and food service</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cost of Fatigue**

**US:** Fatigue costs US employers $136.4 billion per year in health-related lost productive work time—$101 billion more than workers without fatigue. (Source: Do Long Workhours Impact Health, Safety, and Productivity at a Heavy Manufacturer?)

**Canada:** In 2006, 307,000 work-related injury claims associated with shift work represented more than $50.5 million in costs to Canada's workers' comp system. (Source: Shift work trends and risk of work injury among Canadian workers)

**Safety Resources**

For information on fatigue and how to protect workers with a fatigue management system, go to OHS Insider (Canada) or Safety Smart Compliance (US). For safety talks for workers on the dangers of fatigue on the job, go to Safety Smart. And for 10 tips on how to get better sleep, go to Safe Supervisor.

**Being overly tired is the same as being drunk?**

Research has shown that the number of hours awake can be similar to blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels:

- **17 hours awake** = a BAC of 0.5
- **21 hours awake** = a BAC of 0.8 (legal limit in Canada)
- **24-25 hours awake** = a BAC of .10

**Driver Fatigue is:**

- the cause of 4% of fatal vehicle collisions
- a contributing factor in 19% of fatal vehicle collisions
- the cause of about 20% of non-fatal crashes

**Physical Signs and Symptoms of Fatigue**

- Tiredness
- Sleepiness, including falling asleep against your will ("micro" sleeps)
- Irritability
- Depression
- Giddiness
- Loss of appetite
- Digestive problems
- An increased susceptibility to illness

Workers who do “shift work”—that is, work nights or rotating shifts—often have sleep issues and may be twice as likely to get hurt on the job as workers on day shifts. (Source: study by University of BC researchers)

The tragedies of Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and the Exxon Valdez all occurred during the night shift. (Source: Canada Safety Council)