SAFETY TOOLBOX TALK

Week XX : Fatigue Management

GENERAL — *What is Fatigue?*

- Fatigue is the state of feeling very tired, weary or sleepy resulting from insufficient sleep, prolonged mental or physical work, or extended periods of stress or anxiety. Boring or repetitive tasks can intensify feelings of fatigue. Fatigue can be described as either acute or chronic.
  - ⇒ **Acute fatigue** results from short-term sleep loss or from short periods of heavy physical or mental work. The effects of acute fatigue are of short duration and usually can be reversed by sleep and relaxation.
  - ⇒ **Chronic fatigue** syndrome is the constant, severe state of tiredness that is not relieved by rest. The symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome are similar to the flu, last longer than six months and interfere with certain activities.

CAUSE AND AFFECT— *How does fatigue affect the work place?*

Research shows:

- When workers have slept for less than 5 hours before work or when workers have been awake for more than 16 hours, their chance of making mistakes at work due to fatigue are significantly increased.
- The number of hours awake can be similar to blood alcohol levels.
  - ⇒ 17 hours awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 0.05
  - ⇒ 21 hours awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 0.08 (common legal limit in the USA)
  - ⇒ 24-25 hours awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 0.10

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS— *What are the signs of fatigue?*

- weariness,
- tiredness,
- sleepiness, including falling asleep against your will ("micro" sleeps),
- irritability,
- reduced alertness, concentration and memory,
- lack of motivation,
- depression,
- giddiness,
- headaches,
- loss of appetite,
- digestive problems, and
- increased susceptibility to illness.

PREVENTION — *What can you do to combat fatigue?*

- If you suspect you may have a medical condition that interferes with your sleep, consider talking to your doctor.
- Have a consistent sleep schedule. If you work nights, continue your sleep schedule even when you are not at work to not interrupt your rhythm.
- Establish regular eating times and avoid “heavy” or fatty food to avoid after lunch crash.
- Monitor Caffeine intake- Excessive intake of caffeine can cause insomnia, headaches, irritability and nervousness. It is recommended that foods containing caffeine should not be consumed up to 8 hours before sleeping.
- If working nights or in a dark workplace, increase your lighting to raise the alertness in the workplace.
- If working nights, take more frequent breaks or have regular checks of employees to monitor for signs of fatigue and it breaks up repetitious tasks that increase the affects of fatigue.