

Toolbox Talks



We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety **MUST** come first.



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Save the App that could save your life.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In case of emergency, **CALL 000** or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.

POISONS 13 11 26
Poisons Information Centre

A Practical Guide

Fatigue on Farms

Farming is a physically and mentally demanding job, often requiring long hours, exposure to extreme weather, and unpredictable schedules. This can lead to fatigue, a serious safety hazard that can have a significant impact on your health and wellbeing, as well as your safety and that of those around you.

The Hazards and Risks

Fatigue is more than just feeling tired. It's a cumulative effect of sleep deprivation, physical exertion, mental stress, and environmental factors. It can impair your judgement, reaction time, coordination, and ability to concentrate. Impairment due to fatigue can be compared to impairment due to alcohol consumption. Operating a vehicle or item of machinery if you have had less than 4 hours sleep in the past 24 hours increases the likelihood of an incident to the same level as a person with 0.05% blood alcohol levels.

COMMON CAUSES

- **Long Hours:** Working long hours, especially during busy periods, can lead to chronic fatigue.
- **Shift Work:** Disrupted sleep patterns from irregular shifts can make it difficult to get enough rest.
- **Demanding Work:** Physical exertion and mental stress throughout the day can leave you drained.
- **Exposure to Elements:** Working in extreme heat, cold, or wet conditions can zap your energy.
- **Poor Sleep:** Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep due to stress, noise, or light can significantly impact your energy levels.
- **Health Conditions:** Underlying health issues like sleep apnea or anemia can contribute to fatigue. Some medications may also cause drowsiness.
- **Vibration and Noise:** Can cause physical and mental responses in the body that can contribute to fatigue.

On a farm, where you operate heavy machinery, work with animals, and handle potentially dangerous materials, fatigue can significantly increase your risk of:

- **Incidents:** Slower reaction times and impaired judgment can lead to slips, trips, falls, and machinery incidents.
- **Injuries/Fatalities:** Fatigue can make you less aware of your surroundings and more susceptible to injuries from tools, machinery, equipment, and animals.
- **Poor Decision-making:** Fatigue can cloud your judgement, leading to unsafe work practices and risky decisions.
- **Reduced Productivity:** Being tired can make it harder to focus and complete tasks efficiently.
- **Individual Differences:** Individual factors, such as age, health status, or personal lifestyle choices might influence fatigue levels and management strategies.



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A Practical Guide Fatigue on Farms



Operating a vehicle or item of machinery if you have had less than 4 hours sleep in the past 24 hours increases the likelihood of an incident to the same level as a person with 0.05% blood alcohol levels.

Links and Resources

Safe Work Australia
*Guide for Managing the Risk
of Fatigue at Work*
safeworkaustralia.gov.au

Work Safe Victoria
Fatigue on the Farm
worksafe.vic.gov.au

SIGNS OF FATIGUE

Monitor yourself and your work mates for and of the following signs of fatigue:

Physical Signs

- Excessive yawning
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Difficulty sleeping or staying asleep
- Changes in appetite (increased or decreased)
- Frequent colds or infections (a weakened immune system).

Mental and Emotional Signs

- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Forgetfulness
- Irritability or mood swings

- Feeling overwhelmed or stressed
- Reduced motivation or initiative
- Difficulty making decisions
- Slowed reaction times
- Slower thinking and processing.

Behavioral Signs

- Withdrawing from social activities
- Taking longer to complete tasks
- Increased clumsiness
- Poor coordination
- Difficulty controlling emotions
- Increased reliance on caffeine or stimulants.



Reducing the Risk

- **Prioritise Sleep:** Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night. Establish a regular sleep schedule and create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- **Plan Work Schedules:** Where possible, plan work schedules to avoid long hours and minimise night shifts.
- **Take Breaks:** Schedule regular breaks throughout the day to rest, rehydrate, and grab a healthy snack.
- **Manage Workload:** Delegate tasks when possible and avoid taking on more than you can handle.
- **Medication:** Some medications may cause drowsiness. Ensure you understand the side effects of your medication, any restrictions that taking that medication may have on capacity to undertake work and manage workload accordingly.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Find strategies that help you maintain a healthy work-life balance, such as prioritising leisure activities and time off to recharge.
- **Technological Aids:** Invest in technology such as fitness trackers or mobile apps, to monitor sleep patterns and fatigue levels, providing you with real-time data to manage fatigue better.
- **Recognise the Signs:** Be aware of the warning signs of fatigue, such as drowsiness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and headaches.
- **Hydration and Nutrition:** Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Eat healthy meals and snacks to maintain energy levels.
- **Manage Stress:** Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as exercise, relaxation techniques, or spending time with loved ones.
- **Seek Help:** If you're struggling with fatigue, don't hesitate to talk to your doctor or a health professional.

Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

Note: This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

A Practical Guide Fatigue on Farms

Introduction

Welcome everyone.

Emphasise the importance of being aware of the signs and hazards of fatigue.

Mention the Objective

To raise awareness and provide practical tips for identifying fatigue

Icebreaker (optional): Consider starting with a brief question or scenario related to fatigue to engage participants. For example, "On a scale of 1 to 'powered by coffee and sheer will', how are you feeling today?"

Distribution of Resources

Handout printed Toolbox Information Sheets and any other resources.

Key Points

Awareness

- Highlight how fatigue can impact decision making.
- Discuss how being fatigued can prevent you from identifying signs of fatigue.

Know the Signs

- Discuss signs of fatigue.

Farm Vehicles, Plant, and Equipment

- Explain the rules for operating motor vehicles, plant and equipment while fatigued.

Prevention and Reporting

- Let workers know how to report fatigue concerns in themselves and others.

Interactive Discussion & Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, or questions related to managing fatigue.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk.

Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this Toolbox Talk in their daily work.

Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.



Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

CASE STUDIES



Risk Management Tools

DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX

Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing.

All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

farmsafe.org.au

P. +61 2 6269 5622 | E. info@farmsafe.org.au

Disclaimer: This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

CASE STUDY 1 Long Days

Scenario

John, a dairy farmer, wakes up at 4.00 am every day to start milking cows. He often works through the afternoon fixing fences and completing maintenance tasks. One evening, feeling exhausted, John decided to move a hay bale with his tractor 'one last time' before bed. Drowsy and unable to concentrate, John misjudged the distance between the tractor and a washout. The tractor tipped over, pinning him underneath.

QUESTION	ANSWER
How could this incident have been prevented?	Answers may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising sleep • Being aware that fatigue can cause judgement impairment • Not operating machinery or performing high risk tasks at the end of the work day when fatigue may be more debilitating.

CASE STUDY 2 Ignoring the Signs

Scenario

Mark, a grain farmer, often operates his harvester for long hours during harvest season. He frequently ignores signs of fatigue like headaches and difficulty concentrating, pushing himself to finish the job. Most nights he is too tired to cook and eats 2 minute noodles for dinner. One evening just on dark, Mark felt a sudden jolt. He had momentarily drifted off to sleep and the harvester hit a power pole.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What could have been done to prevent this scenario?	Answers may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking frequent breaks • Eating nutritious meals • Swapping tasks with another person.

CASE STUDY 3 Caffeine Hits

Scenario

Judith, an almond farm worker, had a bad nights sleep 3 nights in a row due to a new baby in the apartment next door. She has already had 2 cups of coffee but is still yawning when she shows up for work.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What should Judith do?	Potential Answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let her supervisor know that she is fatigued • Avoid high risk activities • Continue to monitor her fatigue • Have a buddy monitor her fatigue levels • Avoid tasks that expose her to things that may exacerbate the effects of fatigue like heat and vibration.

Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box - they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

A Practical Guide

Fatigue on Farms

On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants

EMPLOYER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature



Farmsafe
AUSTRALIA

Toolbox Talks Facilitator Guide

A Practical Guide
Fatigue on Farms

On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED

2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature