

Risk Assessments and Fatigue – Getting the Most Out of the Process

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In a recent *Sleep Medicine Reviews* article by D. Dawson, J. Chapman, and M. Thomas¹, fatigue-proofing is discussed as an approach to reducing fatigue-related risks, by increasing the likelihood that a fatigue-related error is detected prior to translating into an incident or accident. InterDynamics' Fatigue Hazard Analysis (FHA) Risk Assessment Workshops provide a process for identifying such strategies by assessing the likelihood and consequence of fatigue-triggered events, and determining associated risk improvement actions.

An FHA risk assessment provides a view of the risks associated with a particular role / task, in the context of fatigue as the constant trigger causing an adverse event. The process assesses the impact that fatigue-specific triggers have on the likelihood and consequence of hazard scenarios for that role / task. Risk improvement actions, as outcomes of the FHA risk assessment, can therefore target protections against fatigue-triggered events, as well as controls to minimise / treat fatigue.

Other risk assessment processes which either do not take fatigue into account as a trigger, or only target reducing the likelihood of fatigue, do not result in controls that manage the risks that present when fatigue is at play (i.e. the fatigue context). Additionally, risk assessments that identify contributors to fatigue as the hazard rarely assess the consequence of fatigue. Understanding the level of consequence assists in deciding (and prioritising) what actions are required, as the existence of fatigue itself may not necessarily result in an adverse / intolerable event.

Focusing on controls that reduce fatigue is a positive step towards minimising fatigue-related risks, however this is not enough when wishing to manage fatigue from an overall risk perspective. Practically, fatigue may not always be avoidable, for example during emergencies, staff shortages, times of stress, minor illness / cold, etc., and adequate layering of protections to cover these situations is required.

The fatigue context exists in many work situations and not only within organisations that require shift-work or 24-hour operations. Within this context it is important that risk assessments treat the hazards of the role / task, as well as minimising fatigue itself. InterDynamics' Fatigue Hazard Analysis risk assessment process does this through a consultative process with staff and management, resulting in the quantifying of risks, prioritisation of improvement actions, and targeting risks to levels tolerable to the organisation, all within the context of fatigue.

¹Dawson, D., Chapman, J., & Thomas, M., (2012) Fatigue-proofing: A new approach to reducing fatigue-related risk using the principles of error management. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, Volume 16, Issue 2, pp. 167-175



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“The Fatigue Hazard Analysis was an invaluable process which brought together the experience of our experts from the field to learn about the causation and effects of fatigue, determine the triggers and consequences within our operating environment, and workshop the priority ‘fixes’ for some of these issues.”

Fiona Love Director, Training and Development, Sydney Ferries

InterDynamics’ Fatigue Hazard Analysis risk assessment process.

Fatigue-proofing: A new approach to reducing fatigue-related risk using the principles of error management. (D. Dawson, J. Chapman, and M. Thomas, 2012)