

Personal Factors in Safety

Experience

Experience gives us an ADVANTAGE because it helps us make better decisions. It helps us spot subtle cues, makes us alert and cautious, and prepares us to react.

Never perform an unfamiliar task. Instead, become familiar first by:

- Discussing the task or asking for help
- Referring to procedures and manuals
- Developing a plan that accounts for what might go wrong and what must go right (pre-task planning)

Experience can also work to your DISADVANTAGE. Bad decisions don't always result in immediate safety incidents. As a result, people may miss improvement opportunities and form bad habits.

Eventually, bad habits lead to bad outcomes. Even if you are not getting hurt, if you sense there is a potential hazard, look for safer ways to work.

Judgment

- **Personal.** Be honest about your limitations. Pushing too hard to get work done can get you hurt. Set realistic plans and get help from others when you need it. You need to be mindful of the personal limitations and abilities of your co-workers too so that you will know who to ask for help and who you should be ready to help.
- **Equipment.** Understand and respect the limitations and capabilities of your equipment. Exceeding these limits can get you and others hurt. Take advantage of precautions like personal protective equipment (PPE) and machine safety devices for increased protection against incidental contact. Don't rely exclusively on these devices, because they can fail. Use them with good work practices to keep you away from danger.
- **Risk.** Danger may be greatest when people face a situation for the first time. Try to understand and remember risks. Then take appropriate actions. Becoming desensitized to risk can lead you to use work practices that seem safer than they really are.

Stress

We think and perform less effectively when we are stressed. Minor distractions can become major obstacles to our concentration and losing our focus can lead to bad decisions.

When we are stressed, we may:

- Become rigid and inflexible
- Repeat behaviors
- Break equipment (by trying to force it)
- Lose our concentration
- Miss warning signs (tunnel vision)
- Collide with or drop things
- Have jerky fine motor movements
- Tense our muscles (cause injuries)

Not every problem is within your control, so consider:

- Adopting a positive attitude
- Taking problems in stride
- Being positive
- Walking
- Stretching

Fatigue

Physical Fatigue

Physical fatigue can weaken us. Rushing to finish so that we can rest may lead us to:

- Make bad decisions
- Miss hazards
- Forget precautions
- Collide with things

Mental Fatigue

The causes of mental fatigue may include:

- Extended concentration on a detailed task
- Consuming alcohol or medications
- Having poor sleep habits
- Living an unhealthy lifestyle

The effects of mental fatigue may include:

- Loss of focus
- Dulled senses
- Slow reaction times
- Making mistakes
- Increased risk-taking
- Impaired judgment and decision-making
- Impaired communication skills
- Decreased attention span and inability to recall information
- Failure to anticipate events or actions

Emotional Fatigue

People experiencing emotional fatigue may display these symptoms:

- Quieter or more withdrawn than normal
- Lack of motivation to perform a task well
- Irritable or grumpy with co-workers, family or friends
- Heightened emotional sensitivity
- Low morale

Dealing with Fatigue

If you are mildly fatigued, slow down and allow more distance than usual so that you have extra time and space to react to hazards and obstacles. To prevent fatigue, try to get plenty of restful sleep and live a healthy lifestyle. Sleepiness and fatigue associated with sleep debt is

cumulative. Sleep debt is when you sleep fewer hours than your body needs. Losing even an hour of sleep every other night over the course of a week will produce conditions that negatively affect performance.

Communication

Each team member contributes strengths. Ask for help and take it when offered. If you see someone struggling or being unsafe, say something. Be polite and show concern. We can develop bad habits we don't even know we have. It helps if someone tells us about bad habits.

Effective communication can be maximized when senders make a special effort to speak clearly, and receivers make a special effort to hear and understand – this is often referred to as “**active listening**.”

When you give feedback:

- Send a clear message
- Set aside time for pre-job briefings, task handovers and other planned communication in a quiet place away from distractions
- Make it safe to ask questions
- Ask the receiver to confirm their understanding or restate important details
- Meet face-to-face whenever possible
- Be aware of communication difficulties when there are language differences
- Refrain from the use of jargon and technical terms

When you receive feedback:

- Actively listen
- Ask questions when you are not sure that you heard correctly
- Never assume anything
- Acknowledge and repeat what you heard
- Don't let the conversation end with unresolved ambiguities
- Reserve judgment and keep an open mind
- If a disagreement exists, take the most conservative action until more information is available

Assertiveness

Being assertive is about making sure your voice is heard, not about getting your own way.

Being assertive means:

- Taking responsibility for yourself
- Be unafraid to ask for help and support when you need it
- Being able to say what you think and feel without losing your temper
- Knowing it's OK to say 'no'

If you sense potential danger or safety conditions change for the worse, step back and reassess the situation. If someone tells you to stop work, do so immediately. Exercise Stop Work Authority to pause work if you fear there's an imminent danger to people, equipment or the environment.

Fatigue Symptoms Checklist

Physical Symptoms	Mental Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Yawning repeatedly<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy eyelids or microsleeps<input type="checkbox"/> Eye-rubbing<input type="checkbox"/> Nodding off or head drooping<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches, nausea or upset stomach<input type="checkbox"/> Slowed reaction time<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of energy, weakness or light-headedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty concentrating on tasks<input type="checkbox"/> Lapses in attention<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to communicate important information<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to anticipate events or actions<input type="checkbox"/> Making mistakes even on well-practiced tasks<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty thinking clearly<input type="checkbox"/> Poor decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> More quiet or withdrawn than normal<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation to do a task well<input type="checkbox"/> Irritable or grumpy with co-workers, family or friends<input type="checkbox"/> Low morale<input type="checkbox"/> Heightened emotional sensitivity