The Safety & Health Advisor

Spring 2026

ATLANTIC CHARTER INSURANCE COMPANY

Highlights in this Issue

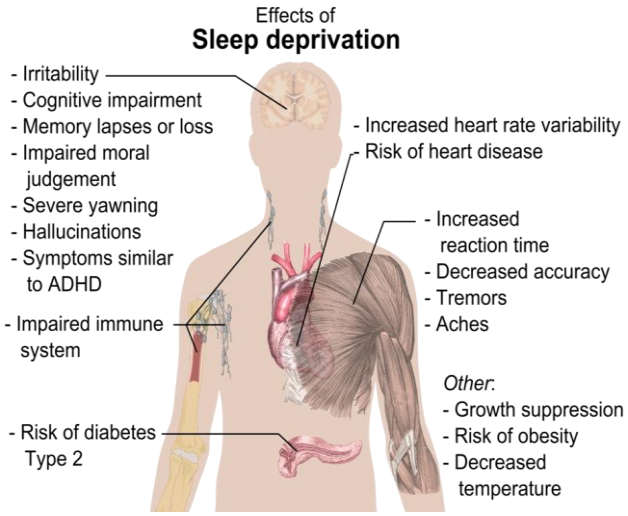
Fatigue's Impact on Safety and Health

In the modern 24/7 economy, "powering through" exhaustion is often seen as a badge of honor. However, from a safety perspective, a fatigued employee is as dangerous as an impaired one. Fatigue is more than just feeling sleepy; it is a physiological state that significantly degrades a person's physical and mental capabilities.

Shift workers* may be scheduled to work days, evenings, nights and/or on a rotating or on-call basis. They may work extended shifts (more than 8 hours long), rotating or irregular shifts, or consecutive shifts resulting in more than the typical 40-hour work week. Long work hours may increase the risk of injuries and accidents and can contribute to poor health and worker fatigue. Studies show that long work hours can result in increased levels of stress, poor eating habits, lack of physical activity and illness.

When a worker is sleep-deprived, their brain begins to experience microsleeps —brief, uncontrollable moments of sleep lasting from a fraction of a second to several seconds. In a high-risk environment, these gaps in consciousness can be fatal. The American College of Chest Physicians has created an Infographic, Shift Work Sleep Disorder that provides before, during and after shift guidance to workers.

Research suggests that being awake for 17 hours straight produces cognitive impairment equivalent to a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.05%. After 24 hours without sleep, that impairment jumps to 0.10%, which is above the legal driving limit in most jurisdictions.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Effects_of_sleep_deprivation.png

Key Impacts on Safety

Fatigue impacts the body in three critical ways that directly lead to workplace incidents:

- **Slow Reaction Times:** A fatigued brain takes longer to process information. If a machine malfunctions or a vehicle swerves, a tired worker may not react fast enough to prevent a collision.
- **Impaired Judgment:** Exhaustion affects the prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for risk assessment. Tired workers are more likely to take shortcuts or ignore safety protocols they would otherwise follow.
- **Reduced Situational Awareness:** "Tunnel vision" often sets in with fatigue. Workers lose the ability to monitor their surroundings, failing to notice hazards like approaching forklifts or warning lights.

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Spring 2026 Regional Safety Conferences

The **New England Chapter** of the **National Safety Council (NSC-NEC)** is hosting two safety conferences in the spring. Registrations are open and tentative session agendas are posted. There will be Keynote presentations and multiple breakout sessions on various safety and health topics for general industry and construction as well as a vendor hall offering products and services. The registration fee depends on your registration date and whether or not your organization is a NSC member.

The second annual ***Greater Massachusetts Safety & Health Conference*** will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, **April 1-2, 2026**, at the Four Points by Sheraton in Norwood, MA. Registration is open. Conference and registration information may be found at: https://www.nscnec.org/mass-safety-conference

The ***55th Annual New Hampshire Safety & Health Conference*** will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday **May 19-20**, **2026**, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown hotel in Manchester, NH. Registration is open. Conference and registration information may be found at: https://www.nscnec.org/nh-conference

It's also time to mark your calendars for the ***13th Annual OSHA Summer Summit*** being held on **Wednesday, June 17, 2026**, at the Campus Center of UMASS Amherst. Registration is open. Information is available at: Summer Summit 2026 Previous Summits had several safety-related vendor booths as well as general and breakout sessions on a number of current safety topics. This event has sold out early in prior years and that is expected to be the case again this year. It is always a reasonably priced day of quality safety and health training and networking!

While fatigue affects every sector, its impact is most visible in industries requiring high vigilance or operating on rotating shifts:

Industry	Primary Risk Factor
Transportation	Long duration driving and "highway hypnosis".
Healthcare	Extended shifts leading to increased risk of falls and needlesticks.
Manufacturing	Repetitive tasks and heavy machinery operation.
Construction	Working at heights and handling power tools.

Addressing the Issue

Preventing fatigue-related accidents requires more than just telling employees to "get more sleep." It requires a **Fatigue Risk Management System (FRMS)** that includes:

1. **Strategic Scheduling:** Limiting consecutive night shifts.
2. **Reporting Culture:** Encouraging workers to report when they feel too tired to perform tasks safely without fear of reprimand.
3. **Environmental Controls:** Improving lighting and ventilation to help maintain alertness.

The National Safety Council (NSC) has created a series of 'free' reports to examine this issue and make recommendations for fatigue management and mitigation. See NSC Fatigue Reports for details.

Fatigue is a hidden variable in many "human error" accidents. Check out the article, How to Conduct Fatigue-Focused Incident Investigations & Enhance Workplace Safety for suggested best practices. By treating rest as a critical safety tool rather than a luxury, organizations can significantly reduce their accident rates.

* Could a pill help shift workers fight fatigue? - Safety+Health Magazine. "*Researchers from the Mass General Brigham hospital system recently found that solriamfetol can help boost alertness in workers who begin shifts earlier than usual*."

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According to Circadian 24/7 Workforce Solutions, most shift schedules were built around operational constraints - not fatigue science. The result? Hidden risks that affect safety, retention, and workforce performance. See link from a recent webinar on this topic https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Awx-wZGgiB0 for additional details.

A Spring Reminder to Prevent Falls

As spring projects ramp up, job sites become busier, crews expand, and exterior work increases. Roofing, elevated framing, ladder work, and scaffold use all present higher exposure to fall hazards.

During the week of May 4th, construction employers and workers across the country are encouraged to participate in the *National Construction Safety Stand-Down*, an annual initiative led by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to raise awareness about fall prevention. The Stand-Down gives employers a dedicated opportunity to reconnect with employees about jobsite risks and reinforce safe practices before incidents occur.

What Is a Stand-Down?
A Safety Stand-Down is a voluntary pause in the workday to discuss safety topics with employees and reinforce safe practices. Some topics may include:

- Toolbox talks on identifying fall risks or review of OSHA standards
- Demonstrations on proper harness inspection and fit
- Ladder and scaffold safety reviews
- Open discussion about specific jobsite concerns

Participating in the Stand-Down demonstrates a company's commitment to employee well-being and regulatory compliance. More importantly, it reinforces a culture where safety is prioritized over speed. Even a short, focused conversation can make a meaningful impact on safety.

Key Fall Prevention Reminders

- Plan work ahead and identify fall exposures
- Inspect fall protection equipment daily
- Use guardrails, covers, and personal fall arrest systems properly
- Empower employees to speak up about unsafe conditions

The Stand-Down is more than a one-day event, it's an opportunity to strengthen safety culture and recommit to protecting your workforce as construction activity increases this spring.

Consistent planning, proper equipment use, and open communication can prevent injuries before they happen.

OSHA/NIOSH Free Small Business Safety App

OSHA and NIOSH jointly developed a new app to assist small businesses, in general industry, to improve safety and health at their workplaces. This free app provides several tools including self-inspection checklists to help identify potential hazards as well as other resources. The app is currently only available for Apple IOS devices but is expected to be available for Android in the future. More information and app download can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/small-business/communications-resources/handbook-app.html

The app is in addition to the "Small Business Safety and Health Handbook." That Handbook is a comprehensive 98-page Guide, intended for General Industry, which was last published in 2021.

The handbook provides guidance on how to implement a safety and health program as well as a variety of self-inspection checklists (with regulatory references) for the workplace for a number of compliance topics such as hazard communication, walking-working surfaces, lockout/tagout, emergency evacuation, material handling, machine and tool safety and personal protective equipment (PPE) and recordkeeping and reporting to name a few. Additional resources from both OSHA and NIOSH are also given.

A PDF version of the handbook listed as DHHS (NIOSH) Publication Number 2021-120 (revised 01/2024) | OSHA Publication Number 2209-01R 2024 may be downloaded for free at: https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/small-business.pdf

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You can find additional information, resources, and guidance on organizing an event at the following link: https://stopconstructionfalls.com/home/.

Specialized Ergonomic Assessments Now Available

TuMeke ergonomics software (https://www.tumeke.io/product/tumeke-suite) is a new tool we have available for job assessment of musculoskeletal injury hazards. The software builds detailed 3D models of the human body moving through space from standard videos of job tasks such as repetitive lifting associated with palletizing. From a short video clip of the job taken from a cell phone, the program completes industry standard assessments to estimate risks with a standard methodology to prioritize interventions to prevent injury.

After a video is uploaded, the system automatically determines the noteworthy postures in a job, frequency of particular movements, and the duration postures are held. It then offers automatic recommendations on which postures in the job are excessive and what parts of the body should be considered for adjustment with estimates of risk reduction impact. The program then uses artificial intelligence to suggest interventions to the job to lower risk.

We have designated one of our Atlantic Charter Safety Consultants to assist with special assessments using this new tool. Please contact your Atlantic Charter Safety Consultant if you are interested in an ergonomic evaluation using TuMeke.

Distracted Driving kills thousands of people every year. For employers, a driving-related accident can be seriously detrimental, leading to financial loss and reputational damage.

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and among the safety issues related to operating a motor vehicle, multitasking is one of the most common and hazardous. Consider these concerning facts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Traffic Safety Administration (NTSA) and National Safety Council (NSC):

- Every day more than 1,000 people are injured and 9 people killed in crashes that involve a distracted driver.
- Approximately 325,000 people were injured in 2023 due to distraction-related crashes.
- Multitasking was to blame for 3,275 fatalities in 2023.
- When we talk on a cell phone, the area of our brain that processes moving images decreases by one-third.

There are three types of driver distractions:

1. Visual – taking your eyes off the road.
2. Manual – taking your hands off the wheel.
3. Cognitive – taking your mind off driving.

Texting is particularly hazardous because it simultaneously involves all three, posing a significant risk to safety. Numerous studies document the risks inherent to visual distracted driving. *One of the better-known examples comes from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), which discovered drivers simply dialing numbers on a cell phone nearly tripled the risk of an accident or close call*.

Here are a few employer tips for April:
• Implement a no phone use policy while driving
• Schedule regular vehicle maintenance checks
• Encourage employees to plan routes ahead of time to minimize distractions.

Check out these links for additional information:

https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving (NHTSA)

Ending Distracted Driving is Everyone's Responsibility (National Safety Council)

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Emergency Eyewash Station Requirements

Questions often arise about emergency eyewash station (and sometimes safety shower) requirements. This article intends to help clarify when this equipment is required, the types of equipment and how it is supposed to be maintained, inspected and tested.

General Industry standard OSHA 1910.151 (c) states **"Where the eyes or body of any person may be exposed to injurious corrosive materials, suitable facilities for quick drenching or flushing of the eyes and body shall be provided within the work area for immediate emergency use."** *In construction OSHA 1926.441 (a)(6) also has specific requirements for battery handling areas*. Injurious materials include corrosive chemicals, strong acids, caustics and cleaners or materials that can cause severe injury or infection to the eyes. One common situation requiring a station is battery charging and handling areas (typically for powered industrial trucks) when the batteries are not sealed and require battery caps to be removed for the addition of water/electrolyte when there is a risk of splashing. *In this case, those stations should be within 25 feet of the hazard.*

The two primary types of emergency eyewash stations that meet requirements are plumbed (connected to a pressurized tepid water supply) and gravity-fed (typically a portable tank with capacity of 14-16 gallons). *The 16–32-ounce personal eyewash bottles do not meet the requirements and are only for supplemental use, such as while getting an individual to a fixed location emergency eyewash station that will provide for the full 15+ minutes of flushing. Personal Bottles can also be used in areas where there are no corrosive chemicals being used for flushing other non-injurious materials from the eye(s), such as dirt, dust or other nuisance irritants.* ANSI Z358.1 is generally referenced for emergency eyewash and safety shower suitability requirements, including that stations are located within a 10-second walking distance (about 55 feet) from the identified hazard on the same level **with a path of travel clear of obstructions**; must deliver at least 15 minutes of flushing; water temperature between 60F-100F; be capable of activating in less than 1 second and remaining open without the use of hands.

All station nozzles should be equipped with protective caps that automatically open when activated to help protect against contamination when not in use.

Plumbed Stations: Must be checked weekly to ensure they are not damaged or obstructed and activated to flush lines of possible contaminants and to verify operation.

There should be a formal annual inspection of all stations.

Gravity-Fed Stations: Must be mounted so that nozzles are between 33-53 inches of the floor level (and at least 6 inches from a wall). They should be inspected weekly to ensure access. Flushing fluid must be preserved (usually with an additive to prevent bacterial growth) and with the fluid replaced according to manufacturer guidelines (usually every 3-6 months).

All maintenance and testing activities should be documented to help ensure compliance.
Your best course of action is to review your operations to determine if there are areas or work tasks with the potential for employee exposure to injurious corrosive materials and ensure that the appropriate emergency eyewash and/or safety shower station is available that meets the aforementioned requirements.

If you need assistance in evaluating your ergonomics or safety and health program, please contact Neal Freedman, John Cotnam, Mark Hickox or Colin Trombley from Atlantic Charter's Safety and Health Department at (617) 488-6500.