PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

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Basic Informations

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TEACHER'S NOTES

A. Hazard Identification and Control Review

Detailed information on the legislated requirements for hazard assessment is included in the chapter on legislation. Detailed information on the process for identifying and controlling hazards and sample hazard assessment forms are included in the chapter on health and safety management systems. A brief overview is provided here to reinforce the importance of the basic principles of hazard identification, assessment and control.

> **What is a Hazard?**
>
> A **hazard** is any situation, condition or thing that may be dangerous to the safety or health of workers.
>
> (OHS Code Part 1)

www

Where's the hazard?

Identifying Hazards

The first step in preventing incidents, injuries or illness in the workplace is identification of existing or potential hazards within the workplace that could cause injury or illness. In Alberta, the employer is responsible for conducting an overall hazard assessment in the workplace (Alberta OHS Code, Part 2); however, all workers should be able to recognize and identify hazards in the workplace on an ongoing basis. As work conditions change, so may the hazards. It is essential that workers be alert and aware of their surroundings at all times.

Controlling Hazards

The hierarchy of controls applies to all types of hazards and is outlined below.

Whenever possible, hazards should be **eliminated**. If this is not possible, hazards must be controlled. **Control** means reducing the hazard to levels that do not present a risk to worker health. Controls, in order of preference, include:

- Engineering Controls
- Administrative Controls
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Used only when other levels of control are not possible or if additional protection is required to ensure the health and safety of workers.)

Hazard Control

B-Overview.ppt
Slide 1

Positive and Negative
Stress Activities

Mental and Physical
Fatigue Simulation

Psychosocial Jeopardy

B. Psychosocial Hazards Overview

A psychological hazard is any hazard that affects the mental well-being or mental health of the worker and may have physical effects by overwhelming the individual coping mechanisms and impacting the workers ability to work in a healthy and safe manner. Although these issues have been around for many years, psychosocial hazards are only now being recognized as potential workplace hazards. The hazards generally are not from physical things that you can see (like a saw blade) or smell (like paint). Rather, many of these hazards come about as a result of interactions with others. In some cases, the hazard is brought into the workplace from the home. There are often no obvious outward signs of the effects of exposure and the methods to control these hazards are somewhat different than methods used to control other traditional workplace hazards. The types of issues or concerns included in this category are:

- fatigue and hours of work
- technological changes
- stress and critical incident stress
- bullying including cyber bulling/harassment
- workplace violence and abuse
- working alone

C. Types of Psychosocial Hazards and Their Control

Fatigue

Drug Brochure – Short
and Long Term Effects

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is the state of feeling very tired, weary or sleepy that results 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. However, if sleep loss or overwork continues, the fatigue can become a chronic state. To recover from this degree of fatigue requires extended rest. People cannot repeatedly deprive themselves of sleep all week and hope to catch up by sleeping in one morning.

(Source: CCOHS, "OSH Answers: Fatigue" (January 2005))

What Are the Signs of Fatigue?

Signs and symptoms of fatigue include:

- tiredness
- sleepiness, including falling asleep against your will; i.e., micro sleeps
- irritability
- depression
- giddiness
- loss of appetite
- digestive problems
- increased susceptibility to illness

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What Are the Potential Effects of Fatigue on Work?

Fatigue cannot be easily measured so it is difficult to pinpoint its effect on workplace incidents. However, studies report the potential effects of fatigue as:

- reduced decision-making ability
- reduced ability to do complex planning
- reduced communication skills
- reduce ability to concentrate
- reduced productivity/performance
- reduced attention and vigilance
- reduced ability to handle stress on the job
- increased reaction time, both in thought and resulting action (A few studies have shown this effect as similar to being legally drunk.)
- loss of memory or the ability to recall details
- failure to respond to changes in surroundings or information provided
- unable to stay awake; e.g., falling asleep while operating machinery or driving a vehicle
- increased tendency for risk taking
- increased forgetfulness
- increased errors in judgement
- increased sick time/absenteeism
- increased medical costs
- increased incident rates

What Are Some Causes of Fatigue?

There are many causes of fatigue. Work-related factors **may** include:

- extended work hours
- long hours of physical or mental activity
- insufficient break time between shifts
- inadequate rest
- excessive stress
- combination of these factors

Fatigue may also result from a sleep disorder. These conditions include:

- **Insomnia** – inability to fall asleep or stay asleep for a full night.

- **Sleep apnea** – a breathing disorder in which there are several brief interruptions in breathing during sleep. Each disruption can last from 10 seconds to more than a minute.

- **Restless legs syndrome** – sensations of creeping, crawling, pulling or tingling that cause an irresistible urge to move the legs. This phenomenon usually happens as a person is trying to fall asleep, making sleep difficult. Movements may also occur during sleep, partially waking the person (even though he or she might not notice) and disrupting sleep patterns.

- **Narcolepsy** – a rare condition associated with sudden sleep attacks, where a person will have an uncontrollable urge to sleep many times in one day.

Other Situations

Substances, such as nicotine, caffeine and alcohol, can affect the quality of sleep.

- **Caffeine** can remain in the body for three to seven hours after consumption and may affect sleep.

- **Alcohol** may shorten the time to fall asleep but disrupts it later in the night.

- **Nicotine** also can disrupt sleep and reduce total sleep time.

For more information on fatigue, see the OHS bulletin: *Fatigue and Safety in the Workplace* at www.worksafe.alberta.ca.

Driving and Fatigue

One of the most serious considerations related to fatigue is sleepiness behind the wheel. Research has shown that impairment from fatigue can be compared to the impairment of alcohol.

Workers must consider this not only during working hours but also when driving home from a night shift, an extended shift or after working many shifts in a row.

Warning signs that you could fall asleep when driving include:

- eyes close or go out of focus by themselves
- difficulty keeping head up
- persistent yawning
- wandering, disconnected thoughts
- do not remember driving the last few miles
- drifting between lanes, tailgating or missing traffic lights
- jerking the vehicle back into the lane
- hitting the grooves or rumble strips on the side of the road
- drifting off the road and nearly crashing

If you have even one of these symptoms, you may be in danger of falling asleep. Pull off the road and take a nap.

(Source: National Sleep Foundation)

Pages 27 and 29

For more detailed information on fatigue and driving, refer to Handout 1 – Warning Signs You Could Fall Asleep while Driving and Handout 2 – Exhausted or Drunk — Behind the Wheel It Makes No Difference.

Tips for Getting There Safely

- Get a good sleep.

- Avoid driving home from work if you are drowsy. Take a short (e.g., 20 minute) nap.

- Plan to drive long trips with a companion. Passengers can help watch for early warning signs of fatigue. Switch drivers, when needed. Passengers should stay awake to talk to the driver.

- Schedule regular stops every 160 km (100 miles) or two hours.

- Avoid alcohol or medications that make you drowsy (except essential medication).

- Car pool, if possible.

- Get a ride from a family member.

- Use public transit.

- If you hit a rumble strip, it is a sure sign that you need to pull off to a safe place and take a nap.

Refer to *Driving for Work: Developing Safe Practices for Employers and Workers* at www.humanservices.alberta.ca/BP014.

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Shift Work

What Is Shift Work?

Shift work means working outside regular Monday to Friday daytime hours. Types of work schedules may include:

- rotating shifts
- extended work shifts (10 to 12 hour shifts)
- night or evening work
- overtime
- part-time work
- weekend work
- compressed work week
- varying working hours
- split shifts
- seasonal work
- on-call work

Factors that May Impact the Effects of Shift Work

Factors that can potentially make the effects of shift work better or worse include:

- features of the shift work scheduling system; e.g., fixed or rotating
- individual characteristics of the shift worker; e.g., age and personality type
- type of tasks of job; e.g., workload, repetitive tasks, tasks requiring concentration

The ability to adjust to shift work is different for every person.

Circadian Rhythm

Human beings are day oriented. We are designed to work in the daytime and sleep at night. The internal body clock (i.e., circadian clock) is responsible for this and controls the body's natural daily rhythm, called the circadian rhythm. The circadian rhythm works roughly on a 24-hour cycle.

Larks and Owls

In our society, if you prefer to go to bed early and get up early, you are considered a lark or morning person. Larks feel more active and alert early in the day.

If you prefer to stay up later and sleep later, you are considered an owl or a night person. Owls feel more active in late afternoon and/or evening.

Examples:

• Fishermen who are out on the water before dawn are usually morning people or larks.

• Musicians who perform in the evening are usually evening people or owls.

Most people are somewhere in-between strict morning and evening types.

Refer to Handout 3 – Sleep Debt Calculator.

Stages of Sleep

As we sleep, we pass through different states and stages of sleep – more likely to be experienced with continuous sleep. The stages of sleep follow a predictable pattern of REM (rapid-eye movement) and NREM (non-rapid eye movement) sleep throughout a typical eight-hour period. Each of these states alternates every 90 minutes.

Both states are important to experiencing quality sleep. Again, getting the right mix and enough of both REM and NREM sleep will help maintain a natural sleep pattern and promote restful and restorative sleep.

On average, workers need 7.5 to 8.5 hours of sleep per day.

See *Shift work and Fatigue eLearning program* at www.worksafe.alberta.ca.

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Slide 3**

Stress in the Kitchen

Stress

What Is Stress?

We hear a lot about stress but what is it?

Stress can be defined as the result of any emotional, physical, social, economic or other factor that requires a response or change. It is generally believed that some stress is okay and, in fact, necessary (sometimes referred to as challenge or positive stress). When stress occurs in an amount or intensity you cannot handle, both mental and physical changes may occur.

Workplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the worker and the amount of control a worker has over meeting these demands. In general, the combination of high demands in a job and a low amount of control over the situation can lead to negative stress.

Causes of Stress at Work

Any event that triggers a stress reaction in your body is called a stressor. Situations at work that may cause stress could include:

- fear of injury or illness
- deadlines
- lack of training for a new job or task
- feelings of pressure
- lack of time to do work
- lack of control of job tasks
- job change
- downsizing of the company
- working with difficult colleagues or clients

Question: I have heard stress can be both good and bad. Is this true?

Answer: Some stress is normal. In fact, it is often what provides us with the energy and motivation to meet our daily challenges, both at home and at the workplace. Stress in these situations is the kind that helps you rise to a challenge and meet your goals, such as deadlines, sales or production targets, or finding new clients. Some people would not consider this challenge a type of stress because, having met the challenge, we are satisfied and happy. However, as with most things, too much stress can have negative impacts. When the feeling of satisfaction turns into exhaustion, frustration or dissatisfaction or when the challenges at work become too demanding, we begin to see negative signs of stress.

In the workplace, stress can be the result of any number of situations. Some examples include:

Categories of Job Stressors	Examples
Factors unique to the job	• workload; i.e., overload and underload • pace/variety/meaningfulness of work • autonomy; e.g., the ability to make your own decisions about job or specific tasks • shift work/hours of work • physical environment; e.g., noise, air quality • isolation at the workplace; e.g., emotional, physical
Role in the organization	• role conflict; e.g., conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors/managers • role ambiguity; e.g., lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations • level of responsibility
Career development	• under/over-promotion • job security; e.g., fear of redundancy either from economy or a lack of tasks or work to do • career development opportunities • overall job satisfaction
Relationships at work (Interpersonal)	• supervisors • co-workers • subordinates • threat of violence or harassment; e.g., from co-workers, customers/clients or the public
Organizational structure/climate	• participation (or nonparticipation) in decision making • management style • communication patterns

Source: CCOHS OHS Answers (2000). Workplace Stress. (Adapted from: Murphy, L. R., Occupational Stress Management: Current Status and Future Direction in Trends in Organizational Behavior, 1995, Vol. 2., p. 1-14).

Refer to Handout 4 – Workplace Stressors.

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Potential Health Effects of Stress

Too much stress can have a negative impact on your overall health. Your body reacts to stress with a fight or flight response. This is very effective for the short term when faced with an immediate danger. However, our bodies deal with all types of stress in the same way and experiencing stress for long periods of time, such as constant stressors at work, will keep this system activated. With long term stressors, the fight-flight system does not get the chance to turn off and this can lead to a variety of possible health effects and symptoms.

Physical

- fatigue
- headaches
- changes in appetite
- increased blood pressure
- grinding teeth
- clenched jaws
- shortness of breath
- muscle aches
- increased perspiration
- trouble sleeping
- depression of the immune system
- cardiovascular disorders
- gastronomical disorders
- weight disorders

Psychosocial

- anxiety
- irritability
- sadness
- defensiveness
- anger
- hypersensitivity
- apathy
- depression
- slowed thinking or racing thoughts
- feelings of helplessness, hopelessness or of being trapped
- pessimism

Behavioural

- eating disorders
- intolerance
- procrastination
- substance abuse
- increased smoking
- withdrawal or isolation from others
- poor job performance
- poor personal hygiene
- change in close family relationships
- absenteeism
- mood swings

Tips for Dealing with Stress in the Workplace

Since the causes of workplace stress vary greatly, so do the strategies to reduce or prevent it. As with any other workplace hazard, the cause should be identified, assessed and controlled, following the hierarchy of controls.

Tips to help you deal with stress include:

• Control physical hazards, such as noise, that contribute to stress.

• Laughing is one of the easiest and best ways to reduce stress. Share a story with a co-worker, watch a funny movie at home with some friends, read the comics and try to see the humour in the situation.

• Learn to relax, take several deep breaths throughout the day or have regular stretch breaks. Stretching is simple enough to do anywhere and only takes a few seconds.

• Take charge of your situation by taking 10 minutes at the beginning of each day to prioritize and organize your day.

• Be realistic about what you can change.

(Source: Canadian Mental Health Association, "Sources of Workplace Stress" Richmond, British Columbia.)

The employer should consider the effects of workplace sources of stress on the health of his or her employees and look for opportunities to improve the work environment; i.e., control the hazard at the source. Things that could be examined include:

• workload; i.e., too much or too little
• competency and training
• organizational support and recognition
• physical work environment; e.g., light, temperature, ambience
• decision-making authority
• shift schedules/flexible work arrangements
• communication/staff participation

Some workers manage better than others in stressful work environments or situations. Some factors that help us cope include:

• physical fitness and regularly participating in physical activity
• maintaining a healthy diet
• getting sufficient sleep
• having a positive/supportive family and/or friends
• being able to talk to friends/family

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Harassment Scenario
Solution Skit

Bullying Role Playing

Bullying in the Workplace

What is Workplace Bullying?

Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could mentally hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes, bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression.

While bullying is a form of aggression, the actions can be both obvious and subtle. Bullying is usually considered to be a pattern of behaviour where one or more incidents show that bullying is taking place.

Examples of bullying:

- spreading malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo that is not true
- excluding or isolating someone socially
- intimidating a person
- undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work
- physically abusing or threatening abuse
- removing areas of responsibilities, without cause
- constantly changing work guidelines
- establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail
- withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information
- making jokes that are obviously offensive, by spoken word or e-mail
- intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
- assigning unreasonable duties or workloads that are unfavourable to one person
- creating a feeling of uselessness through underwork
- yelling or using profanity
- criticizing a person persistently or constantly
- belittling a person's opinions
- unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment
- blocking applications for training, leave or promotion
- tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment

(Source: CCOHS OSH Answers (March 8, 2005). Bullying in the Workplace.)

Refer to Handout 5 – Examples of Bullying Behaviours.

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How Can Bullying Affect the Workplace?

Bullying affects the overall health of an organization and may contribute to:

- increased absenteeism
- increased turnover
- increased stress
- increased costs for Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAP)
- difficulty recruiting new workers
- increased risks for incidents
- decreased productivity and motivation
- decreased morale
- reduced corporate image and customer confidence
- poor customer service

Controls for Bullying Behaviours

OHS legislation does not expressly cover workplace bullying. However, under the *OHS Act*, employers and workers have the general duty to ensure the health and safety of workers. The OHS Code, Part 27, addresses workplace physical violence, but the provisions do not extend to harassment and bullying, if these actions do not cause or not likely to cause physical injury. Controls should be covered under the workplace violence policies and procedures, as outlined in the next section.

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Workplace Violence

Under the Alberta OHS Code Part 1, violence that occurs at a work site or is work related means "the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury."

In Alberta, the potential for workplace violence must be assessed just as any other workplace hazard. Requirements are identified in the OHS Code, Part 2 and Part 27. For information on employer and worker requirements, review the OHS Code and Explanation Guide at www.worksafe.alberta.ca.

Preventing Workplace Violence

If workplace violence is identified as an existing or potential hazard, Part 27 of the OHS states that employers must:

- develop policies and procedures for potential workplace violence
- train workers in recognition and response to potential workplace violence and the policies and procedures in place
- advise workers to consult a health professional if exposed to or injured as a result of workplace violence

What Work-related Factors Increase the Risk of Violence?

Certain work factors, processes and interactions can increase the chance of exposure to workplace violence. Examples include:

- working with the public

- handling money, valuables or prescription drugs;
  e.g., cashiers, pharmacists

- carrying out inspection or enforcement duties;
  e.g., government employees

- providing service, care, advice or education;
  e.g., health care staff, teachers

- working with unstable or volatile persons;
  e.g., social services, criminal justice system employees

- working in premises where alcohol is served;
  e.g., food and beverage staff

- working alone, in small numbers,
  e.g., store clerks, real estate agents,
  or in isolated or low traffic areas;
  e.g., washrooms, storage areas, utility rooms

- working in community-based settings;
  e.g., nurses, social workers, home visitors

- having a mobile workplace;
  e.g., taxicab

- working during periods of intense organizational change or stress;
  e.g., strikes, downsizing

- geographic locations, such as:
  - near buildings or businesses that are at risk of violent crime;
    e.g., bars, banks
  - in areas isolated from other buildings or structures
  - in areas with higher levels of criminal activity

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The chance of exposure to workplace violence may be greater at certain times, such as:

- late hours of the night or early hours of the morning
- tax return season
- overdue utility bill cut-off dates
- Christmas
- paydays
- report cards or parent interviews
- performance appraisals

Which occupational groups tend to be most at risk from workplace violence?

Certain occupational groups tend to have an increased exposure to the hazard of workplace violence. These occupations include:

- health care employees
- correctional officers
- social services employees
- teachers
- municipal housing inspectors
- public works employees
- retail employees

Refer to Handout 6 – Preventing Violence and Harassment at the Workplace.

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Working Alone

In Alberta, there are requirements for ensuring the health and safety of workers who work alone. These are outlined in the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code, Part 28. For information on the employer and worker requirements, review the Code at www.humanservices.alberta.ca/WA001 and Explanation Guide at www.humanservices.alberta.ca/ohscode-guide.

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Slide 8

For the purposes of legislated requirements, working alone is defined as: 1) "if a worker is working alone and 2) assistance is not readily available if there is an emergency or the worker is injured or ill."

Working alone is considered a hazard that requires hazard assessment and control under Part 2 of the OHS Code.

Employers are required to provide effective radio, telephone or other electronic communications between a worker who works alone and persons capable of assisting the worker in an emergency if the worker is injured or ill. If an effective electronic communication is not practical or readily available (e.g., in some parts of Alberta, cell phones will not work), the employer must make sure that:

- the employer or designate visits the worker or
- the worker regularly contacts the employer or designated worker

Regular contact is to at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazard associated with the worker's work.

For more detailed information on working alone and sample checklists, see the WHS publication, *Working Alone Safely: A Guide for Employers and Employees*, available at:
www.humanservices.alberta.ca/workingalone.

Although not addressed in the legislation, it is important to recognize that workers who work alone a lot might feel isolation and stress as a result of this work arrangement.

Employment Standards Related to Working Alone

It is important to note that under Alberta Employment Standards legislation, there are restrictions regarding young persons working alone.

Young persons, aged 12, 13 and 14 years, cannot work between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. at all.

Young persons, aged 15, 16 and 17 years old, working in certain occupations and times of the day, have restrictions on if/when they are permitted to work alone:

- A young person who works from 9:00 p.m. to midnight must be in the continuous presence of at least one other individual, 18 years old or older, in the following:
  - a place that sells food or drink
  - a retail store
  - a retail business that sells gas or other petroleum or natural gas products
  - a hotel or motel

- Between midnight and 6 a.m., young persons are not permitted to work in the above businesses at all.

- Young persons may work in other industries after midnight **only** if the following conditions are met:
  - The young person's parent or guardian provides the employer with written consent to the employment.
  - The young person is always in the presence of at least one other individual, 18 years old or older.

For further information on employment standards, visit their website at www.hirestandards.alberta.ca.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name three examples of psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

2. Name four examples of bullying behaviour in the workplace.

3. List three work-related factors that may increase exposure to workplace violence.

4. List three signs of fatigue.

5. True or False? The effects of fatigue can be similar to the effects from alcohol consumption.

REVIEW QUESTIONS, WITH ANSWERS

1. **Name three examples of psychosocial hazards in the workplace.**
    Answer: Any of the following – fatigue, stress, shift work, bullying, workplace violence, working alone.

2. **Name four examples of bullying behaviour in the workplace.**
    Answer: Any of the following:

    - spreading malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo that is not true
    - excluding or isolating someone socially
    - intimidating a person
    - undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work
    - physically abusing or threatening abuse
    - removing areas of responsibilities, without cause
    - constantly changing work guidelines
    - establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail
    - withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information
    - making jokes that are obviously offensive, by spoken word or e-mail
    - intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
    - assigning unreasonable duties or workloads that are unfavourable to one person
    - creating a feeling of uselessness through underwork
    - yelling or using profanity
    - criticizing a person persistently or constantly
    - belittling a person's opinions
    - unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment
    - blocking applications for training, leave or promotion
    - tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment

3. **List three work-related factors that may increase exposure to workplace violence.**
   Answer: Any of the following:

   - working with the public

   - handling money, valuables or prescription drugs; e.g., cashiers, pharmacists

   - carrying out inspection or enforcement duties; e.g., government employees

   - providing service, care, advice or education; e.g., health care staff, teachers

   - working with unstable or volatile persons; e.g., social services, criminal justice system employees

   - working in premises where alcohol is served; e.g., food and beverage staff

   - working alone, in small numbers, e.g., store clerks, real estate agents, or in isolated or low traffic areas; e.g., washrooms, storage areas, utility rooms

   - working in community-based settings; e.g., nurses, social workers, home visitors

   - having a mobile workplace; e.g., taxicab

   - working during periods of intense organizational change or stress; e.g., strikes, downsizing

   - geographic locations, such as:
     – near buildings or businesses that are at risk of violent crime; e.g., bars, banks
     – in areas isolated from other buildings or structures
     – in areas with higher levels of criminal activity

4. **List three signs of fatigue.**
    Answer: Any of the following:

    - tiredness
    - sleepiness, including falling asleep against your will; i.e., micro sleeps
    - irritability
    - depression
    - giddiness
    - loss of appetite
    - digestive problems
    - increased susceptibility to illness

5. **True or False? The effects of fatigue can be similar to the effects from alcohol consumption.**
    Answer: True

Warning Signs You Could Fall Asleep while Driving

Warning signs that you could fall asleep while driving include:

- eyes close or go out of focus by themselves
- difficulty keeping head up
- persistent yawning
- wandering, disconnected thoughts
- do not remember driving the last few miles
- drifting between lanes, tailgating or missing traffic lights
- jerking the vehicle back into the lane
- hitting the grooves or rumble strips on the side of the road
- drifting off the road and nearly crashing

If you have even one of these symptoms, you may be in danger of falling asleep. Pull off the road and take a nap.

(Source: National Sleep Foundation)

Exhausted or Drunk — Behind the Wheel It Makes No Difference

Workplace Health and Safety

Bulletin

WORK SAFE
ALBERTA

Exhausted or Drunk — Behind the Wheel It Makes No Difference

Our society considers it unacceptable to operate a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. In Alberta, the legal limit for blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is .08 percent. At this level, drivers are considered to be impaired. Thinking and reflexes slow down, judgment may be impaired, speech may slur, and there may be problems with memory. Drivers in this condition should not operate, nor should they be allowed to operate, any motor vehicle.

A 1999 study by Australian researchers on the effects of lack of sleep on human performance may force us to look at worker fatigue in the same way. Since fatigue or tiredness is so difficult to measure, the researchers compared impairment due to sleep deprivation with alcohol-induced impairment. While the laboratory setting may not always reflect the "real world", the results may surprise you.

Subjects were kept awake and asked to perform four tasks at hourly intervals. The tasks judged the accuracy and speed of subjects on grammatical reasoning and vigilance (watchfulness) tests. Findings of the study suggest that after only 20 hours of sustained wakefulness, a person may be as functionally impaired as someone with a BAC of .10 percent. That's a level of alcohol intoxication greater than the level legally permitted in Alberta.

> After only 20 hours of sustained wakefulness, a person may be as functionally impaired as someone with a BAC of .10 percent.

The results of this study support the suggestion that even moderate levels of sustained wakefulness reduce performance to an extent greater than is currently acceptable for alcohol intoxication. Since

Government of Alberta ■

ERG027— Ergonomics
Revised March 2004 – Reformatted September 2010　　　　　　　1

A PDF version of this document can be downloaded from www.worksafe.alberta.ca

Sleep Debt Calculator

Calculating Sleep Debt

Enter the number of hours of sleep you actually had for each day over the past week. Then, enter the number of hours of sleep you had on a day when you felt well rested. If you are unsure of this number – enter eight hours (the number of hours required by the average person).

Day	Hours of Sleep
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	
Total Hours Slept	
Number of hours of sleep when you feel rested (or, if unsure, enter 8)	
Rested number x 7 = Hours of sleep you should have	
Number you should have minus total number you had	

If the number is positive, you are probably getting enough sleep.

If the number is negative, you have a sleep debt. Look at making some changes to your lifestyle so that you can get more sleep.

Workplace Stressors

| Categories of Job Stressors	Examples
Factors unique to the job	• workload; i.e., overload and underload • pace/variety/meaningfulness of work • autonomy; e.g., the ability to make your own decisions about job or about specific tasks • shift work/hours of work • physical environment; e.g., noise, air quality • isolation at the workplace; e.g., emotional, physical
Role in the organization	• role conflict; e.g., conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors/managers • role ambiguity; e.g., lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations • level of responsibility
Career development	• under/over-promotion • job security; e.g., fear of redundancy, either from economy or a lack of tasks or work to do • career development opportunities • overall job satisfaction
Relationships at work (Interpersonal)	• supervisors • co-workers • subordinates • threat of violence or harassment from • co-workers, clients/customers, or public
Organizational structure/climate	• participation (or nonparticipation) • in decision making • management style • communication patterns

Examples of Bullying Behaviours

Bullying is a form of aggression but actions can be both obvious and subtle. Bullying is usually considered to be a pattern of behaviour where one or more incidents show that bullying is taking place. Examples of bullying behaviour include but are not limited to:

- spreading malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo that is not true
- excluding or isolating someone socially
- intimidating a person
- undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work
- physically abusing or threatening abuse
- removing areas of responsibilities, without cause
- constantly changing work guidelines
- establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail
- withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information
- making jokes that are obviously offensive, by spoken word or e-mail
- intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
- assigning unreasonable duties or workloads that are unfavourable to one person
- creating a feeling of uselessness through underwork
- yelling or using profanity
- criticizing a person persistently or constantly
- belittling a person's opinions
- unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment
- blocking applications for training, leave or promotion
- tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment

(Source: CCOHS, "OSH Answers (March 8, 2005) Bullying in the Workplace")

Preventing Violence and Harassment at the Workplace

Workplace Health and Safety
Bulletin

⚠️
WORK SAFE
ALBERTA

Preventing Violence and Harassment at the Workplace

Out of date
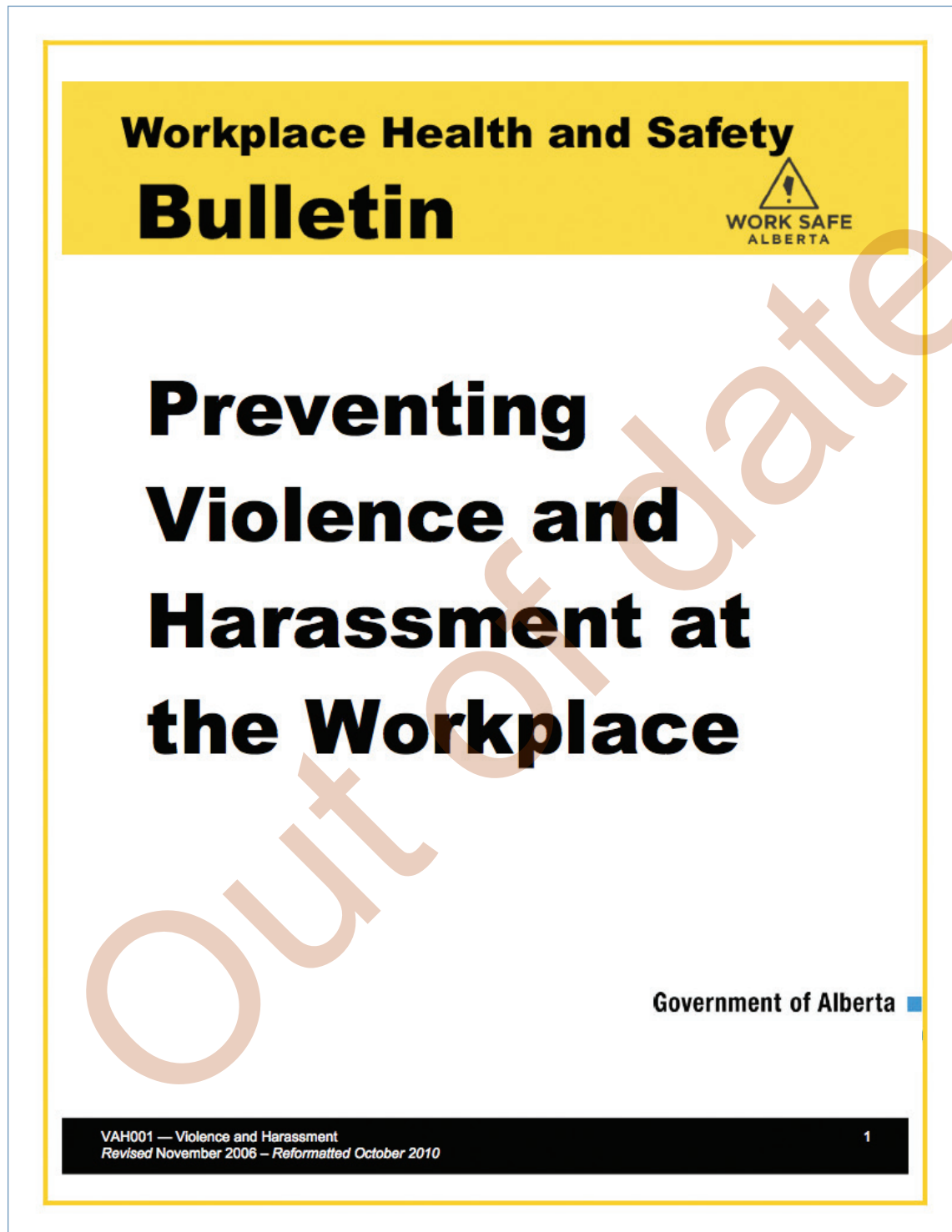
Government of Alberta ■

VAH001 — Violence and Harassment
Revised November 2006 – Reformatted October 2010   1

A PDF version of this document can be downloaded from www.worksafe.alberta.ca

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Psychosocial Hazards Include:

- fatigue and hours of work
- stress
- bullying: cyber bullying/harassment
- workplace violence and abuse
- working alone

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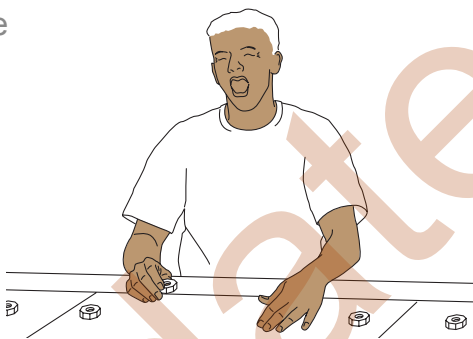Work Safe Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Teacher Resources

B-Overview.ppt Slide 1

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Fatigue

Hazards of working fatigued:

- reduced decision-making ability
- increased reaction time
- forgetfulness
- increased error rate
- reduced attention to work/details

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C-Types.ppt Slide 1

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Tips for Getting There Safely

- Get a good sleep.
- Avoid driving home from work if you are drowsy. Take a nap.
- Plan to drive long trips with a companion.
- Schedule regular stops at least every two hours.
- Avoid alcohol or medications that make you drowsy.
- Car pool, if possible. Catch a ride.
- Use public transit.
- If you hit a rumble strip, STOP! Take a nap.

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C-Types.ppt Slide 2

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Stress

Causes of work-related stress include:

- deadlines/lack of time to complete tasks
- lack of training
- lack of control over decisions
- company downsizing

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C-Types.ppt Slide 3

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Health Effects from Too Much Stress

- headache
- fatigue
- digestive problems
- cardiovascular disorders
- muscle aches
- anxious
- irritable
- defensive
- sad
- apathetic
- poor job performance
- substance abuse
- argumentative
- impatient
- poor hygiene practices

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C-Types.ppt Slide 4

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Bullying

- pattern of behaviours or comments that could harm someone mentally or emotionally

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C-Types.ppt Slide 5

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Examples of Bullying Behaviours

- spreading gossip
- excluding person from group
- undermining person's work
- constantly changing the rules
- making obviously offensive jokes
- setting impossible deadlines or giving person nothing to do
- publicly belittling person

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C-Types.ppt Slide 6

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Workplace Violence

- threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury

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C-Types.ppt Slide 7

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Working Alone

Defined as:

"1) A worker is working alone at a work site and
2) assistance is not readily available if there is an emergency or the worker is injured or ill."

The employer must:

- have effective radio/telephone communication with the worker or
- schedule regular visits with worker

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C-Types.ppt Slide 8

TEACHER'S NOTES

A. Work-life Balance

What are work-life balance initiatives?

Work-life balance is about balancing the roles and responsibilities of work with the roles and responsibilities of home and family. A conflict between these two roles can lead to stress and fatigue for workers. Work-life balance initiatives are any benefits, policies or programs that help create a better balance between the demands of the job and the healthy management (and enjoyment) of life outside work.

Work/life initiatives can potentially deal with a wide range of issues, including:

- on-site child care
- elder care initiatives
- flexible working arrangements
- parental leave for adoptive parents
- family leave policies
- other leaves of absence policies, such as educational leave, community service leave, self-funded leave or sabbatical
- employee and family assistance programs
- on-site healthy living seminars and workshops on topics, such as stress and nutrition
- internal and/or external educational or training opportunities
- fitness facilities or fitness membership assistance

Drug Brochure – Short and Long Term Effects

B. Substance Abuse in the Workplace

Substance Abuse and the Workplace

The use of substances, such as alcohol or drugs, and the possible impact on the workplace is of concern to both employers and workers. Many aspects of work require the worker to be alert and impairment may lead to serious incidents or injuries. Substance use can affect the workplace in a variety of ways, including:

- direct effects of substances that affect the worker's ability to do the job safely

- after effects of substance use (e.g., hangover, withdrawal) affect job performance

- absenteeism, illness and reduced productivity

- preoccupation with obtaining and using substances while at work, interfering with attention and concentration

- illegal activities at work, including selling illicit drugs to other workers

- psychological or stress-related effects, due to substance use by a family member, friend or co-worker

What is Workplace Substance Abuse?

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) defines workplace substance abuse as "the use of a potentially impairing substance to the point that it adversely affects performance or safety at work, either through intoxication or hangover, or indirectly through social or health problems."

Common Substances Used and Their Effects

Category	Examples	Examples of General Effects
Alcohol	beer, wine, spirits	impaired judgement, slowed reflexes, impaired motor function, sleepiness or drowsiness, coma, fatal overdose
Cannabis	marijuana, hashish	distorted sense of time, impaired memory, impaired coordination
Depressants	sleeping medicines, sedatives, some tranquilizers	inattention, slowed reflexes, depression, impaired balance, drowsiness, coma, fatal overdose
Hallucinogens	LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (angel dust), mescaline	inattention, sensory illusions, hallucinations, disorientation, psychosis
Inhalants	hydrocarbons, solvents, gasoline	intoxication similar to alcohol, dizziness, headache
Nicotine	cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff	initial stimulant, later depressant effects
Opiates	morphine, heroin, codeine, some prescription pain medications	loss of interest, nodding, fatal overdose (If used by injection, the sharing of needles may spread hepatitis B, or C and HIV.)
Stimulants	cocaine, crystal meth, ecstasy, crack cocaine	elevated mood, overactivity, tension/anxiety, rapid heartbeat, constriction of blood vessels

(Source: Blume, S.B., "Alcohol and Drug Abuse" in the Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety (4th edition, International Labour Office, 1998) from CCOHS Bulletin.)

What Are the Costs to a Business?

The economic impacts of substance abuse in Canada to businesses or industry have been traditionally difficult to measure. Many costs are hidden by general absenteeism or illnesses, unnoticed lack of productivity or inability or reluctance to link substance abuse directly with causes of incidents.

What Can the Workplace Do?

Work can be an important place to address substance abuse issues. Employers and employees can collaborate to design policies that outline what is an acceptable code of behaviour and what is not. Impairment needs to be recognized as a performance issue and treated as such. By establishing or promoting programs, such as an Employee and Family Assistance Program, employers can help troubled employees receive help either directly through the EFAP or through referrals to community services.

Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAP)

What Is an EFAP?

An EFAP is a confidential, short term, counselling service for employees and their families. EFAP service providers are independent organizations with a contract to the employer. EFAPs should be part of a larger company plan to promote wellness. Supervisors and all employees need to receive information about the role of EFAP and how to access its services.

What Is the Purpose of an EFAP?

EFAPs are designed to help people understand or overcome personal problems. While most EFAPs offer a wide range of services, they often refer to other professionals or agencies who can offer more or extended care in particular areas.

What Types of Services Does an EFAP Offer?

An EFAP provides help with:

- personal issues
- job stress
- relationship issues
- elder care, child care, parenting issues
- harassment
- substance abuse
- separation and loss
- balancing work and family
- financial or legal concerns
- family violence

Some EFAP providers are also able to offer other services, including retirement or lay-off assistance and wellness/health promotion and fitness, such as weight control, nutrition, exercise or smoking. Others may offer advice on long-term illnesses, disability issues, counselling for crisis situations (e.g., death at work) or advice in dealing with difficult situations specific to managers and supervisors.

Who Can Use an EFAP?

EFAPs are generally open to all employees and members of their immediate family.

C. Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS)

Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) refers to exposure to tobacco smoke from someone else's cigarette, cigar or pipe. Breathing in ETS is known as passive smoking, second-hand smoke or involuntary smoking.

Composition of Tobacco Smoke

Tobacco smoke consists of solid particles and gases. More than 4000 different chemicals have been identified in tobacco smoke. The number of these chemicals that are known to cause cancer in animals, humans or both is reported to be in the range from 30 to 60.

The solid particles make up about 10 percent of tobacco smoke and include tar and nicotine. The gases or vapours make up about 90 percent of tobacco smoke. The major gas present is carbon monoxide. Other gases include formaldehyde, acrolein, ammonia, nitrogen oxides, pyridine, hydrogen cyanide, vinyl chloride, N-nitrosodimethylamine and acrylonitrile.

What Is Meant by Mainstream and Sidestream Smoke?

Mainstream smoke is the smoke that is inhaled and then exhaled from the smoker's lungs.

Sidestream smoke is the smoke that enters the air directly from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. The burning end of a cigarette is not usually hot enough for complete combustion of the tobacco to occur. Since some chemicals are favoured by this incomplete burning, undiluted sidestream smoke contains higher concentrations of several chemicals than the mainstream smoke inhaled by the smoker. These chemicals include 2-naphthylamine, N-nitrosodimethylamine, 4-aminobiphenyl and carbon monoxide.

Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is composed of both mainstream and sidestream smoke. ETS is diluted by the air in the room before it is inhaled and is, therefore, less concentrated than mainstream or sidestream smoke.

Every person – both smokers and nonsmokers – in a room with ETS will have similar exposure because nearly 85 percent of ETS in a room comes from sidestream smoke. The smoker is also exposed to mainstream smoke but this exposure is limited to the time it takes to smoke a cigarette. Exposure to ETS, however, remains constant for the entire time spent in that room.

Why Does Smoking Cause Harmful Health Effects in the Workplace?

The fact that smoking, especially cigarette smoking, can damage people's health is well documented. Cigarette smoking is a leading cause of preventable disease and death. It is a major cause of emphysema, chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease.

Cigarette smoking also increases the total exposure to harmful chemicals that workers receive. More important, it can act in combination with workplace chemicals to raise the level of damaging health effects. In addition, harmful health effects can occur from smoking a cigarette that is contaminated with chemicals or other substances used or produced on the job. Nonsmokers may also develop health problems from breathing in smoke from co-workers' cigarettes.

D. Changing Workplaces

The workplace is in a constant state of change. We have moved from a strongly manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. Even in traditional manufacturing industries, new technologies significantly change how the manufacturing is done as well as the role of the worker. Change happens because of:

- *Trends in the economy* locally, provincially, nationally and globally – currently, a more globally competitive service-based economy is developing. Work is increasingly characterized by information and information technology. Job insecurity increases with downturns in the economy.

- *Changes in employment patterns* – over the past few years, the following employment trends have been occurring:
  - increasing employment in the services sector that has resulted in more sales and computer-related jobs and part-time work
  - increasing employment in professional, scientific and technical services, which include computer design services, such as programming, internet page design and computer systems analysis
  - increasing employment in amusement, gambling and recreation, including casino jobs and jobs in recreational facilities, such as golf courses, ski hills and fitness centres
  - increasing employment in health care
  - decreasing employment in agriculture
  - decreasing employment in education

- *Societal trends*, such as culture shifts – examples in the last 20 years include cigarette smoking becoming unacceptable in many settings, cyclists being required to wear helmets and parents paying special attention to their children's seat belt. The culture in many workplaces is also shifting to one where health and safety is a way of life and workers expect to go home in the same (or better) condition than they were in when they came to work. Injuries and illnesses are unacceptable.

- *Demographic changes* – changes, such as the ageing of the workforce and the increase in female participation, have influenced work practices. For instance, having more females in the workforce increases the quest for better ways to balance home and work life and makes the demand for quality day care a workplace issue. The average age of workers is increasing. Older workers generally have more health issues (e.g., diabetes, heart diseases). They might also have some physical limitations in performing certain jobs. On the other hand, they have a wealth of knowledge and experience to bring to the job. Employers need to determine how to both meet the needs of these employees and best use their strengths.

- *Legislation and other workplace standards* (e.g., Canadian Standards Association standards) – standards evolve with new information and experience, new technology and demands from society in general.

- *Increasing nonstandard types of work* – the old standard for hours of work was 35 to 40 hours per week, usually eight hours a day, five days a week. Some people worked shift work. Over the past few decades, no-standard work practices like part-time work, self-employment, temporary work and work at home have generally increased so that more than 30% of the workforce is made up of workers in nonstandard types of employment.

Changing workplaces can have both advantages and disadvantages for the health and safety of workers. Understanding this can help workers take the steps they can to protect themselves and know what to expect from their employer.

Some examples of changes include:

- increased part-time work
- longer workday
- increase in small-sized firms and self-employment
- increase in temporary work, fixed-term contracts and use of temporary help agencies; i.e., contracting out
- more workers than ever working at home and telecommuting

RESOURCES

Fatigue

"Fatigue, Extended Work Hours and Safety in the Workplace"
www.humanservices.alberta.ca/ERG015

Shift Work

CCOHS, "Rotational Shift Work"
www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/work_schedules/shiftwrk.html

Workplace Violence

"Preventing Violence and Harassment at the Workplace"
www.humanservices.alberta.ca/VAH001

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