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ACT
**FIRE &
RESCUE**

COMMUNITY FIRE UNIT FATIGUE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY DIRECTORATE
ACT EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCY
ACT FIRE & RESCUE

NOVEMBER 2024



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1 PURPOSE

1.1 This Guideline is applicable to all personnel from the Community Fire Units (CFU), as defined in the *Emergencies Act 2004*, engaged in firefighting operations and training within the ACT. It provides practical guidance to CFU Team Leaders to manage the risks associated with fatigue to themselves and personnel in their unit. All CFU members must comply with this Guideline at an incident, in training or at a community engagement activity.

1.2 This Guideline should be used in conjunction with the *JACS Managing Fatigue in the Workplace Policy*.

1.3 This Guideline will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, with a formal review to occur at a minimum of every two years.

2 FATIGUE – WHAT IS IT?

2.1 Fatigue is the mental and/or physical exhaustion that reduces your ability to perform your work safely and effectively. People who are fatigued may experience a range of physical and psychological symptoms, including:

- muscular fatigue – a decrease in the maximal force or power that muscles can produce.
- mental fatigue – a gradual reduction in optimal cognitive performance.
- impaired psychomotor ability (tasks that involve both physical and cognitive performance, e.g. hearing a tree branch cracking overhead and rapidly moving to safety), and lack of energy, lethargy and exhaustion.
- emotional fatigue – reduced ability to engage in emotional activities, such as empathising with or caring for others.¹

2.2 Fatigue, especially cumulative fatigue, can compromise an individual's ability to respond to an emergency incident safely and effectively.

¹ AFAC Managing Fatigue in Emergency Response Guideline, Version 2.0, 5 May 2022.

3 HOW DO YOU MANAGE FATIGUE?

3.1 There are a number of measures you can put in place to manage fatigue during an operation, or training exercise. These include:

- Awareness – general awareness about the signs and symptoms of fatigue and how to manage them.
- Appropriate work/rest protocols to avoid exhaustion and maximise recovery.
- Adequate hydration and nutrition.
- Appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment.

3.2 More detailed consideration of the above mitigations is included in the planning and risk assessment table below.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF CFU MEMBERS TO MANAGE FATIGUE

4.1 CFU Team leaders must:

- Include consideration of fatigue as part of the risk assessment for an operation or training session and plan supplies and rosters to mitigate the likely impacts of heat stress > [see the planning table of general considerations on the following page](#).
- Ensure ongoing management and assessment of risks throughout operations or training sessions.
- Report any fatigue concerns for themselves or any personnel in their crew.

4.2 All CFU members must:

- Take personal responsibility to manage their own fatigue during an operation or training session > [see the planning table of general considerations on the following page](#).
- Report any fatigue related concerns - for themselves or for colleagues - to their Team Leader.

5. PLANNING AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Considerations for managing and mitigating the risk of fatigue

5.1 Before undertaking work or training activities, the CFU Team Leader should carry out a risk assessment to mitigate the likely impacts of fatigue on themselves and CFU team members. This assessment and planning should consider:

<p>Work activity and breaks</p>	<p>Are you ensuring shift lengths do not cause unacceptable fatigue of personnel?</p> <p>Breaks between shifts: 10 hours</p> <p>Maximum number of consecutive day shifts: 5</p> <p>Maximum number of consecutive night shifts: 3</p>
<p>Rest, recovery and sleep</p>	<p>Is your team well rested?</p> <p>CFU members should have a minimum of 10 hours free from duty within every 24 consecutive hour period, this allows for the opportunity for 8 hours of prone rest as well as time for general recovery, nutrition and personal hygiene.</p> <p>CFU members are encouraged to prioritise the quantity and quality of their sleep throughout an extended operation.</p> <p>If called to a fireground after completing a full or partial day's work in a non-firefighting occupation, personnel should monitor fatigue and review this when flagging their availability.</p>
	<p>Are your members well hydrated?</p> <p>Have they eaten?</p> <p>Hydration is a common source of fatigue for emergency</p>

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<p>Hydration and nutrition</p>	<p>workers and is best managed by prevention.</p> <p>CFU members should attend shifts fully hydrated and replenish any fluids lost through sweating.</p> <p>To avoid fatigue, personnel should eat a healthy well-balanced diet throughout the day and take care to moderate total intake of fat, sugar and salt.</p>
<p>Drugs, alcohol and caffeine</p>	<p>Have any CFU members been drinking or on drugs (prescription or otherwise)?</p> <p>Alcohol and drug use (including illicit drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medicines) have the potential to cause fatigue at times that are not desirable or safe.</p> <p>Caffeine can also cause irritability, headaches, poor concentration, tremors and adverse gastrointestinal side-effect. Caffeine should be consumed in moderation.</p>
<p>Ongoing monitoring and reporting</p>	<p>Are all crews being monitored for signs of fatigue?</p> <p>All personnel should monitor themselves for any symptoms of fatigue and report any issues to crew leaders.</p>

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Related legislation and documents

Emergencies Act 2004 (ACT)

JACS Managing Fatigue in the Workplace Policy

Amendment History	Description of changes
Version number:	
1.0	Created

Version control

Guideline created by	ACTF&R Training and Development
Version number	1
File location	
Approval officer	ACTF&R CHIEF OFFICER
Review date	November 2026
Section responsible for review	ACTF&R CFU Section



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