

## ADDRESSING THE HAZARDS OF EXTENDED SHIFTS

Even if irregular or extended shifts is commonplace in many industries, it can't be denied that going beyond the traditional 8-hour schedule can increase fatigue, errors, and adverse events and outcomes in the workplace, as well as negatively impact productivity. Unfortunately, despite growing concern, OSHA still doesn't have a specific standard that prohibits extended or unusual work shifts. However, they do have guidelines intended solely to inform employers and workers of the danger of working on extended shifts.

### What are the effects of extended shifts?

Extended work shifts are more stressful physically, mentally, and emotionally to employees. Non-traditional shifts are known to disrupt the body's regular schedule, leading to increased fatigue, stress, and lack of concentration. The signs of fatigue, both mental and physical, vary and depend on the person and the degree of exertion. Examples are:

- weariness
- irritability
- loss of appetite and digestive problems
- reduced alertness, lack of concentration and memory
- lack of motivation
- sleepiness
- depression
- recurring headache
- increased vulnerability to illness

### How to address irregular schedules?

With today's current setup, it's important for both employers and employees to know how extended shifts can affect the production and absenteeism within the organization. Being familiar with OSHA's set of guidelines should help set companies set a standard and find an agreeable solution to staffing problems that will benefit both sides. When given a choice, managers should limit the use of extended shifts and increase the number of days employees work instead. If it cannot be helped, additional *breaks* should be given to the staff so that they can get past long and irregular shifts.

Managers should also receive sufficient **Safety and Compliance Training** in order to better address workforce-related issues that may lead to harmful and detrimental effects to employees. For more workforce management solutions, visit [360training.com](http://360training.com) today and subscribe to one of the industry's largest and most trusted Workplace Safety & Compliance Library online.