FIGHTING FATIGUE

Fatigue is the condition of being physically or mentally tired or exhausted. Extreme fatigue can lead to uncontrolled and involuntary shutdown of the brain, which can be extremely dangerous on a construction site. Research has shown that:

- 17 hours of continuously being awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of .05;
- 21 hours of continuously being awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of .08 (the legal limit in Indiana); and
- 24-25 hours of continuously being awake is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of .10.

These statistics show that when you are fatigued it is very likely that you will make errors in judgement. Your mind and eyes can be off task, and you can make a critical error.

A sleep-impaired worker may also experience lack of manual dexterity and alertness. The drowsiness associated with sleep deprivation can jeopardize safety when working with machinery, at heights and certainly while driving vehicles. Sleep-impaired workers may be more irritable and might take more risks than they would if they were rested. Research has also proven that workers are far more likely to forget rote tasks when they are deprived of sleep on a regular basis.

Here are some tips from the National Sleep Foundation for getting a good night’s sleep:

- Don’t sleep in on your days off. Maintain your workday sleep schedule.
- Wind down before going to bed. Experts recommend that you establish a regular relaxing routine to transition between waking and sleeping. Soak in a hot tub or read a book before retiring. This can greatly improve your quality of sleep. Make your bedroom sleep friendly by making it a dark, quiet, cool and comfortable place.
- Use your bed for sleeping. Watching television or working on a computer can impede your ability to truly relax when it’s time to sleep.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol for several hours before bedtime.
- Allow enough time for sleep. Before you protest and say you would if you could, consider that people who get enough sleep are significantly more productive during their waking hours than people who are sleep deprived.
- Nap when possible. A 20-minute nap (no more) followed by exercise will make you feel refreshed and provide a pick-me-up that will make you more productive.
- Exercise regularly and complete your workout a few hours before bedtime.
- Finish eating at least two to three hours before your regular bedtime.

Remember, the treatment for sleepiness and fatigue is sleep. A rested worker is more alert and focused, and is likely to be more productive and work safely.

Download the recording form here.