

**Goals: This session should help the participant:**

- Identify key issues involved in supervising shiftworkers.
- Supervise shiftworkers effectively to promote safety, productivity, and high-quality performance.

**1. Shiftwork Offers Employers and Employees Flexibility and Other Benefits**

- Shiftwork allows an organization to operate around the clock, promoting additional productivity and profits.
- Some work is done more easily after regular business hours—for example, maintenance and repairs and work on computer networks.
- Shiftwork also allows organizations to offer 24/7 customer service.
- In addition, shiftwork benefits employees who prefer to work outside traditional hours.
- Although not required by the Fair Labor Standards Act, shiftworkers are usually rewarded with premium pay known as shift differentials.
- Shift work schedules include three fixed 8-hour shifts or two 12-hour shifts.
  - Benefits of 12-hour shifts for employees generally include several consecutive days off after working a number of days on (a minivacation).

**2. Shiftworkers Must Receive All the Same Training Opportunities as Other Workers**

- Make sure shiftworkers receive all training required by law, such as safety training and sexual harassment training, as well as training necessary for skill-building, high-quality performance, and advancement.
- Schedule training at convenient times for shiftworkers so that they do not have to give up sleep time or family time to attend training sessions.
- Make sure new shiftworkers receive a complete orientation, including basic job training, safety training, and emergency response training, as well as training on issues specific to shiftwork.
- Conduct on-the-job training with shiftworkers whenever possible, and emphasize coaching and one-on-one training sessions.
- Cross-train to prevent boredom, fatigue, and diminished alertness among nightworkers.
  - Give shiftworkers the skills and responsibility to handle numerous different tasks.
  - Effective cross-training makes jobs more fulfilling, reducing turnover and making long shifts easier to handle.
- Be available to shiftworkers and lend assistance and support whenever necessary.

**3. Pay Special Attention to Shiftworkers' Health and Safety**

- Because shiftwork disrupts the body's natural waking and sleeping rhythms, shiftworkers are more likely to suffer from a variety of health problems and have higher absenteeism rates.
  - Medical conditions that may be worsened by working night shifts include ulcers and gastrointestinal disorder, depression, diabetes, and chronic heart disease.



- While it might be illegal to make hiring and other employment-related decisions based on these conditions, relevant health information can be used for working out the best schedules for particular workers to improve the overall health and safety of the workforce.
- Shiftworkers are also more likely to have job accidents as a result of fatigue and boredom.
- Research suggests that exposure to bright light results in improved alertness, particularly if the exposure comes before the nightly low in body temperature (usually around 5 a.m.).
- To minimize fatigue and promote alertness, also permit shiftworkers to take numerous short breaks—if possible, as many as five per shift.
- Allow controlled napping—for example, research indicates that a 10- to 20-minute nap early in a shift—significantly improves alertness and reduces nodding off on the job.
- Set up a postwork rest room where nightworkers can take a short nap before driving home to reduce the risk of road accidents due to fatigue.

#### **4. Focus on Communication**

- Maintaining effective communication among management, shift supervisory personnel, and shiftworkers is sometimes difficult, and this can lead to communications breakdowns. —It's your job to make sure communications flow freely to and from shiftworkers.
- To improve communications hold frequent short meetings at the start of the shift.
- Develop a communications center—a bulletin board or website for shiftworkers, providing them with important information, including company news, benefits information, updates on changes, social event announcements, etc.
- Create an advisory team of shiftworkers with at least one representative from each job function to meet regularly to help you identify and solve problems specific to shiftwork.
- Use computer or phone messaging to communicate with shiftworkers outside shift hours.

**Applicable Regulations:** Americans with Disabilities Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act

#### **Training Tips:**



- Review your organization's shiftwork policy and discuss schedules and differentials.
- Discuss training programs, schedules, and requirements for shiftworkers.
- Ask participants to identify any problems they have been having supervising shiftworkers, and discuss solutions.

#### **Knowledge Review:**



—Distribute copies of the handout and discuss. Then have participants complete the Supervising Shiftworkers Quiz. It provides a useful review of the subject.