How to use this guide

This guide is for supervisors, foremen, dispatchers and managers of workers who drive for work, commute long distances or work shifts and rotations. Read Sections 1 to 4 once and keep them handy. Use Sections 4 and 5 every time a worker reports fatigue or you see the signs, Sections 6 and 7 when you review hazard assessments and your program, Sections 9 and 10 for training and toolbox talks, Section 11 to track reports over time, and Section 12 to record your review.

- **Your job in one line:** nobody you supervise drives when they're too tired, and nobody is punished for saying so.
- **Hours of service:** most workers in pickups, vans and cars aren't covered by hours of service rules. For them, your company's OHS duties and fatigue rules are the control.
- **Plan ahead:** know before it happens who can approve a hotel room, a ride or a later start, so cost never becomes the reason someone drives.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Fatigue	Feeling very tired, weary or sleepy from mental or physical factors (Government of Alberta). Treated as a form of impairment.
Fitness for duty	Being able to do the job safely at the start of the shift and throughout it. For drivers, that includes being rested enough to drive.
Fatigue risk management	A planned system for managing fatigue: policy, hazard assessment, scheduling rules, trip planning, self-checks and reporting, training, and review.
Extra-provincial carrier	A truck or bus carrier that crosses provincial, territorial or national borders and falls under the federal hours of service rules.
Circadian low	Natural low points: sleepiness peaks between midnight and 6 a.m. (NHTSA), and Alberta reports most major workplace incidents between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. and 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Section 1: Fatigue duties by jurisdiction

Every Canadian OHS law has a general duty, and fatigue is managed under it. These are the duties summarized in the guide. For other jurisdictions, check your OHS legislation.

Jurisdiction	General duty	What it means for fatigue
Federal	Canada Labour Code s. 124: every employer shall ensure that the health and safety at work of every person employed by the employer is protected.	Covers federally regulated employers, including interprovincial trucking, whatever the vehicle.
Alberta	OHS Act Part 1: employers protect workers as far as reasonably practicable; supervisors take all precautions necessary and warn of known or reasonably foreseeable hazards; workers take reasonable care.	Government guidance names work-related fatigue as a hazard to assess; workers must not work when impairment creates a risk.
British Columbia	OHS Regulation s. 4.19: a worker must report an impairment that may affect safe work; workers must not be assigned work where a reported or observed impairment creates undue risk.	A note to sections 4.19 and 4.20 names fatigue as a potential source of impairment.
Saskatchewan	Employers provide a safe and healthy workplace, with the information, training, supervision and experience workers need.	Fatigue falls under the general duty and the safety program.
Ontario	Employers take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.	Ontario's impairment guidance (written for drugs and alcohol) says supervisors who know a worker is impaired should consider stopping them from hazardous work.

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Jurisdiction	General duty	What it means for fatigue
Commercial drivers (all)	Hours of service rules limit driving and on-duty time (see the driver checklist, Part F).	Federal rule: no one may require or allow a driver to drive if driving would be likely to jeopardize safety. Alberta: fatigued drivers must not operate a commercial vehicle.

Section 2: Scheduling and rotation review

Schedules decide how much sleep is possible. Review these with your manager whenever rosters change. Tick each item that is in place.

- ☐ Shift length plus travel time leaves room for 7 or more hours of sleep. (Alberta notes extended shifts can leave only 4 to 5 hours for sleep after travel, eating and social time.)
- ☐ Schedules are consistent enough for regular sleep; quick turnarounds (late finish, early start) are avoided.
- ☐ There is a rule for when overtime or a call-out means a ride, a room or a later start instead of a drive.
- ☐ Long drives and other safety-sensitive tasks are scheduled outside midnight to 6 a.m. and the afternoon low where possible.
- ☐ The last day of a rotation doesn't end with a full shift followed by a long drive home.
- ☐ The first day of a rotation doesn't require leaving home in the middle of the night.
- ☐ Crew transport or accommodation is used for long commutes, and camp rooms allow real rest (quiet, dark, meals available).
- ☐ Consecutive days and runs of night shifts are limited, and sleep debt is considered at the end of a run.
- ☐ Hours of service drivers are scheduled with room for traffic, weather and delays, not to the legal maximum.

Section 3: Signs to watch for

Before the drive or shift	On the road or reported by others
Seems sleepy, irritable, sad or giddy (Government of Alberta)	Drifting in the lane or onto the shoulder
Mistakes on simple tasks, trouble concentrating, forgetfulness	Speed creeping up and down
Coming off a long run of shifts, a night shift or a call-out	Head nodding or micro-sleeps
Mentions a sleepless night, a new baby or a sick family member	Can't recall the last few kilometres
Heavy eyes, frequent yawning, slow responses	Missed check-ins or a long unexplained stop

Section 4: When a worker is too tired to drive

Step	What to do
1. Take it seriously	Thank the worker for speaking up. If you noticed the signs, raise it privately and calmly: "You look done in. How much sleep did you get?"
2. Don't let them drive	Take the keys if you have to. Alberta supervisors must take all precautions necessary; Ontario's impairment guidance (written for drugs and alcohol) says supervisors who know a worker is impaired should consider stopping them from hazardous work.
3. Offer a safe alternative	Rest or a nap in a safe place, another rested driver, a crew vehicle, a taxi or ride service, or a hotel room. Use the options below.
4. Adjust the work	Move the drive to the next morning, reassign the trip or reschedule the job. Tell the client or dispatcher yourself.
5. Don't penalize honesty	No discipline, lost pay, teasing or pressure for reporting fatigue in good faith.
6. Record it and find the cause	Complete Section 5. Look at the schedule, overtime, call-outs and commute, and track any fix as a corrective action.

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Safe alternatives I can approve (fill in your company's limits so you can act on the spot):

Alternative	Approved?	Approval limit or contact
Rest or nap in a safe place before driving	☐	
Another rested driver or crew vehicle	☐	
Taxi, ride service or pick-up	☐	
Hotel or motel room	☐	
Later start or rescheduled trip	☐	
Reassign the trip to another worker	☐	

> **What to say:** "Thanks for telling me. You're not driving tonight. Let's get you a room and you can head out after a proper sleep. We'll sort out the job in the morning." Avoid: "Just grab a coffee and take it easy," or "Everyone's tired, we need the truck back."

Section 5: Fatigue report and response record

Worker | **Date** | **Time** | **Location**

How it came up

☐ Worker self-reported ☐ Supervisor observed ☐ Co-worker raised it ☐ Found through check-in

Hours worked before the drive | **Approx. hours slept in last 24 h** | **Planned drive (km / h)** | **Time of planned drive**

Signs observed or reported

☐ Sleepy or heavy-eyed ☐ Yawning ☐ Irritable or giddy
☐ Mistakes or poor focus ☐ Drifting or speed changes ☐ Micro-sleep or nodding

Action taken

☐ Rest or nap ☐ Another driver ☐ Crew vehicle
☐ Taxi or ride ☐ Hotel room ☐ Rescheduled or reassigned

Likely contributing factors

☐ Shift length or overtime ☐ Night shift ☐ Call-out
☐ Long commute ☐ Rotation start or end ☐ Personal (no details recorded)

Follow-up action	Owner	Due date	Done	Notes
			☐	
			☐	
			☐	

Supervisor | **Signature** | **Date**

Record only what's needed to keep people safe and fix the cause. Don't record medical details; ask whether a worker is fit to drive, not for their medical history.

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Section 6: Hazard assessment prompts for roles that drive

Prompt	Notes and controls
Is driving listed as a task for this role in the job hazard analysis?	
How far, how often and at what time of day does this role drive?	
How many hours have workers usually worked before the drive?	
Does the role include night shifts, call-outs, overtime or rotations?	
Can the drive be removed or shortened (transport, accommodation, schedule)?	
Is there a fatigue question on the daily field-level hazard assessment?	
Do workers drive alone? What is the check-in system?	
Are commercial vehicles involved? Which hours of service rules apply?	

Energy Safety Canada's 2023 COR audit protocol asks whether all positions have tasks identified and whether hazards for each task are identified; its examples include fatigue among psychological hazards.

Section 7: Fatigue risk management program checklist

- [ ] A written fatigue policy says nobody drives when too tired and fatigue reports never lead to discipline.
- [ ] Fatigue is assessed in the hazard assessment for every role that drives.
- [ ] Scheduling rules cover shift length, overtime, rest between shifts, call-outs and when a drive becomes a ride or a room.
- [ ] A trip planning rule covers long or higher-risk drives, with breaks and check-ins.
- [ ] Workers have a simple self-check and an easy way to report fatigue.
- [ ] Workers and supervisors are trained on causes, signs and what to do.
- [ ] Supervisors know their approval limits for hotels, rides and later starts.
- [ ] Vehicle incident and near-miss investigations ask about hours worked and sleep.
- [ ] Fatigue reports are reviewed for patterns at least quarterly, and schedules are fixed when patterns appear.
- [ ] Sleep health education is offered (for example, the free North American Fatigue Management Program for carriers and drivers).

Section 8: Common supervisor mistakes

- Saying "be careful out there" instead of stopping a tired worker from driving.
- Treating hours of service as the whole answer, or scheduling drivers to the legal limit.
- Ignoring the drive home after a night shift or at the end of a rotation.
- Questioning the cost of a hotel room in front of the crew, so nobody asks again.
- Asking for medical details instead of asking whether the worker is fit to drive.
- Closing a vehicle incident investigation without asking about hours and sleep.

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Section 9: Worked examples

Four situations supervisors run into, with what a good response looks like. Use them for supervisor training or a toolbox talk.

Situation	A good response
A worker finishing a 12-hour night shift asks to drive three hours home.	Don't approve the drive yet. Offer a room or a rest area to sleep first, or a ride. Agree on a start time after real sleep and record it in Section 5. Ask whether the rotation schedule needs to change.
A crew member keeps nodding off at the morning tailgate meeting before a two-hour drive to site.	Speak to them privately. Put another rested worker behind the wheel or reassign the trip. Find out why (call-out, new baby, long commute) without asking for medical details, and follow up.
A driver misses a 1 a.m. check-in on the highway.	Follow the missed check-in procedure right away: call, then escalate as your plan says. Once you reach them, have them stop and rest, and review why the drive was happening at that hour.
A dispatcher pushes to get a delivery done tonight, but the driver says they're exhausted.	Back the driver. The federal hours of service rules say no one may require or allow a driver to drive if driving would be likely to jeopardize safety. Reschedule the delivery and tell the customer yourself.

Section 10: Toolbox talk notes

- After 17 to 19 hours awake, performance on some tests matched a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 per cent (Williamson and Feyer, 2000).
- Adults need seven or more hours of sleep a night (American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research Society).
- After a night shift, 6 of 16 test drives had near-crashes; after sleep, none did (Lee et al., 2016).
- Almost one-fifth of Canadian drivers said they had nodded off or fallen asleep at the wheel in the past year (TIRF, 2011).
- Coffee buys a little time. NHTSA's advice for a drowsy driver is one to two cups of coffee and a 20-minute nap in a safe, lit place, and the benefit is short-lived. Only sleep fixes fatigue.
- Saying "I'm too tired to drive" is the right call, and nobody here gets in trouble for it.

Section 11: Crew fatigue report log

Keep a running log so patterns show up. Several reports after call-outs, night shifts or the same route point to a schedule or planning problem, not a people problem. Review it at least quarterly.

Date	Worker or crew	How it came up	Action taken	Likely factor	Closed
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐

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Section 12: Review and sign-off

Supervisor	Crew / department	Date reviewed

Changes needed (schedules, rules, training, approvals)

Manager	Signature	Next review

Want help? Calgary Safety Consultants helps employers assess driving and fatigue hazards, write fatigue and journey management procedures and train supervisors. Call 1-888-231-0358 or visit calgarysafetyconsultants.ca. Free guide: calgarysafetyconsultants.ca/safety-guides/hazard-management/driver-fatigue/.

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