
	<h1>Frequently Asked Question</h1>				
Ref: FAQ:018:02	RE: Night Work and Shift Work				
Issue date:	June 2016	Revised Date:	October 2020	Review date:	October 2022
Author(s):	NH&SF – Information & Advisory Team.				
Note:	<p><i>This information/advice has been issued in response to frequently asked questions around a specific topic and may not cover all issues arising, should you require more specific advice please contact the Health & Safety Help Desk. The management of any occupational safety and health issue(s) remains the responsibility of local management.</i></p> <p>For further Health and Safety information relating to COVID-19 please refer to the following website.</p>				

What is night work?

Night work refers to work carried out during the period between midnight and 7 a.m. on the following day.

What is a night worker?

A night worker is an employee:

- who normally works at least 3 hours of his or her daily working time during night time (i.e. between midnight and 7 a.m. on the following day), and
- who's 'night-time' working hours in each year is equal to or exceeds 50% of the total number of hours worked by him or her during that year.

What is shift work?

Shift work shall mean any method of organising work in shifts whereby workers succeed each other at the same work stations according to a certain pattern, including a rotating pattern and which may be continuous or discontinuous, entailing the need for workers to work at different times over a given period of days or weeks.

What is a shift worker?

A shift worker is any worker whose work schedule is part of shift work.

Is it legal to work alone at night-time?

Yes, it is legal for workers to work alone at night, but a risk assessment must be completed to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of an employee from night work and lone worker perspective. There is nothing specific in general legislation that prohibits a person from working alone at night.

Is the employer required to complete a risk assessment?

Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires the employer to undertake a risk assessment. Therefore, in general, an employer must assess whether an employee is at significantly higher risk when working at night, and determine what measures should be put in place to eliminate or minimise such risks. However, in addition to undertaking a risk assessment, the employer must also consider the provisions of Section 16 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, relating to night workers.

Does the employer have to assess and monitor the health of night workers?

Yes, the employer must offer the employee an assessment, free of charge, in relation to the effects, if any, on their health because of night working. This assessment should be offered:

- before he/she employs a person as a night worker, and
- at regular intervals during the period that the person is employed as such a worker. For further information please contact your local Occupational Health Department.

Who carries out these health assessments?

A registered medical practitioner or a person acting under his or her supervision must carry out this assessment (please contact your local Occupational Health Department for further advice and information).

Is the employer informed of the outcome of such a health assessment?

The medical practitioner informs the employer concerned of his/her opinion as to whether the employee is fit or unfit to perform the night work concerned, *taking into account medical confidentiality*. If their opinion is that the employee is unfit to perform night work *only* because of the particular conditions under which that work is performed, it may be possible that the same employee could be considered fit to work if certain changes in working conditions were made.

What must an employer do if a night worker becomes ill or shows symptoms of ill health that is/are connected to night/shift work?

If a night worker becomes unwell for reasons connected with night work, the employer, must in the first instance, refer the employee to the local Occupational Health Department for a medical review. Thereafter the employer will be guided by the recommendations as prescribed by the Medical Practitioners' review.

What factors should employers consider, so as to minimise the adverse safety and health effects of night/ shift work?

- Include shift and night workers in all training initiatives

- Educate managers, shift workers and night workers about the need for proper sleep and the dangers of fatigue
- Ensure all night and shift workers are considered in all applicable risk assessments and workstation assessments
- Adjust exposure levels to noise, chemicals, physical hazards, as necessary, as workplace exposure levels are based on 8-hour reference periods, and not extended shifts
- Ensure car parks and external entrances are well lit at night time
- Provide welfare facilities for night/shift workers
- Ensure proper ventilation of the workplace
- Ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to safeguard lone workers

Additional Resource Information:

Health and Safety information relating to COVID-19 please refer to the following [website](#).

Legislation:

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, Chapter 3 of Part 6: Night Work and Shift Work

Useful Contacts and References:

HSA, 2007, Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, Chapter 3 of Part 6: Night Work and Shift Work

HSA Guidance for Employers and Employees on Night and Shift Work, 2012 Edition.