

Health & Safety Department (Safety Section)

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Document History Log

Any modification to the document must be reviewed and approved
as per the corporate policies and procedures of document control

Version #	Date	Prepared/reviewed by	Modifications summary
2.0	20/08/2025	Omar Gouda	New corporate template New Dubai Government Logo Unifying the word “workers” as is the standard per ISO 45001, instead of “employees” and “workers” inconsistently
3.0	04/07/2026	Safety Section	General adjustments of phrasing in 4.2 and 4.3

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to minimize any adverse Health and safety effects of night and shift work on workers and employer.

Today an increasing number of workers do night and shift work as part of their work contract. There are several reasons but not limited to are, economics of continuous production, business needs, the need to provide a 24-hour commercial or emergency service, summer and Ramadan restricted working hours.

Federal Law no. 8 (UAE Labor Code) and Local Order 61 of 1991 clearly emphasizes the role of employers to take every precaution necessary for the protection of his/her workers and ensure their safety from any occupational illness or potential work accidents. The employer shall also initiate appropriate control measures to improve work conditions and thereby provide a healthy work environment for his/her workers.

This guide describes measures employers and workers shall adopt at work to reduce any adverse health effects and prevent injuries to night or shift workers and loss to business.

2 Scope

This technical guideline shall apply to all commercial and industrial establishments, public and government institutions, including construction-project sites in the Emirate of Dubai.

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3 Definitions

Definition	Meaning
Nighttime	For the purpose of this technical guideline, the period between 6:00 PM and 7:00 AM following day.
Night Work	Any work carried out in “Nighttime”.
Night Worker	Worker engaged in Night Work.
Shift Work	Method of organizing work, whereby workers succeed each other at the same workstation, according to certain pattern of working hours. Such as 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.
Shift Worker	Worker engaged in Shift Work.

4 Guidelines

4-1 Risk Assessment Requirements and Factors to be Considered

All employers having their work activities which needs to be performed during night and/or in shifts work, shall only be performed after conducting appropriate risk assessment for these activities and implementing suitable defined controls to prevent ill health and injury at work.

For appropriate risk assessment following risk factors related to night and shift work shall be considered:

- **Workload** - Mental and physical demand for performing the work such as, workers with appropriate workload are more effective and productive, and less fatigued than those with excessive or insufficient workload. Concentration and productivity tend to decline towards the end of the shift or during nighttime work and may result in ill health effect and incidents.

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- **Work activity** - Monotonous and repetitive work activity for long duration may lead to fatigue and result in untoward incident, variation in work activity or periodic rest across a shift can help relieve fatigue.
- **Shift pattern and shift rotation** - Permanent shift workers have the risk of chronic sleep debt, fatigue, ill-health and disruption of family and social life. Also, constantly changing (fast and slow) shift pattern means workers may have difficulty adapting to the schedule.
- **Shift timing** - Risk of errors and accidents are higher at night shift due to fatigue and lack of alertness, which results from lack of sufficient sleep.
- **Shift duration** - Eight hours shift is considered adequate, anything more than this may create fatigue or other ill health issues.
- **Rest breaks within and between shifts** - short or long breaks could be issued for the person doing overtime, keeping in mind that breaks that are too long could lead to unalert and unrefreshed state at work which may further result in incidents.
- **Physical environment** - Such as lighting, glare, temperature, ventilation and humidity (at the workplace), if not controlled to the required level could result in ill-health and accidents at workplace.
- **Physical workplace conditions** - Such as excavation, ground levels and other obstacles, could result in serious injuries if not appropriate control is not taken, specifically during night work.
- **Management issues** - Such as overtime, shift swapping, standby and on call duties, training and information, communication needs to be given attention to reduce stress on individual/team, loss of information and reduces lack of alertness at work. Thus, help in reducing fatigue and preventing incidences at work.
- **Individual factor** - Individuals react differently to the effects of night shift, this is mainly due to combination of individual's factors such as age, gender, lifestyle, attitude and behavior.
- **Social and family factors** - Workers who do not have sufficient time to interact with their families and friends because of shift working and the need to rest in between may feel deprived and isolated,

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leading to moodiness and negativity. This behavior may affect in work performance and result in unwanted errors leading to incidents.

- **Health assessment** - Person working during night and shift works, are liable to have health issues. Considering this, periodic health assessment is essential tool to identify early symptoms of ill-health and prevent further illness.

4-2 General Recommended Practices for Employers in View to Prevent Ill-Health and Injury Effects to Night and Shift Work Workers of their Establishments

- In case of working in night and shift work, following risk controls measures may be exercised as applicable:
- Avoid scheduling dangerous, demanding, monotonous and/or safety critical work during early morning, night or towards the end of long shifts or during other periods of low alertness.
- Avoid workers on permanent night shift as feasible.
- Workers may be asked of choice between rotating and regular shift schedule wherever practicable.
- Wherever possible, arrange shifts start/end times to be convenient for public transport or consider providing transport for workers on particular shifts.
- Limit shifts to a maximum of twelve hours (including overtime) and consider the needs of vulnerable workers.
- Limit night shifts or shifts where work is demanding monotonous, dangerous and/or safety critical to eight hours.
- Consider if shifts of a variable length or flexible start/end times could offer a suitable compromise.
- Avoid split shifts unless absolutely necessary for business needs.
- Encourage and promote the benefits of regular breaks away from the workstation.
- When switching from day to night shifts or vice versa, allow workers a minimum of two nights of full sleep.
- Build regular free weekends (or at least one weekend day) into the shift schedules.
- Mutually get agreed on timing and procedures for communicating information between successive shift teams and ensure they are followed at all times.

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4-3 Recommended Practices for Workers/Individuals in View to Prevent Ill-Health and Injury during Night and Shift Work

4-3-1 During driving to and from the workplace to accommodation

Fatigue increases the risk of having vehicle accidents, especially after a long shift or night work or before commencing an early shift. Accordingly, following controls may be exercised:

- Do not drive if overtired.
- Get a lift or use public transport or a taxi if possible
- Drive carefully and do not speed
- Rest breaks shall be taken when signs of drowsiness are experienced while driving.

4-3-2 Sleep pattern

Try to develop a regular sleep pattern including at least seven to eight hours sleep.

- Where sleep is not immediately achievable, adequate rest should still be taken.
- Suitable sleep timing should be identified and followed consistently.

4-3-3 Diet

Digestive problems are common with shift workers both because of the timing of meals and the quality of food. Meal planning should support alertness during working hours and promote adequate rest during off-duty periods

4-3-4 Stimulants and sedatives

Sedating substance (including alcohol and prescribed medication) must be completely avoided as they significantly increase risk of hazardous incidents due to their effect on mind. Use of such substance is a blatant violation to law, especially when handling heavy machinery or vehicles.

Stimulants, such as coffee, nicotine and other substances are recommended to be used wisely to avoid consequences of tolerance and crashing effects.

4-3-5 Physical activity

Some studies have found Night/Shift workers are more prone to chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cardiac diseases. Regular physical activity supports fitness, assists in calorie control, and improves sleep quality. Regular exercise promotes a healthy heart and keeps weight down, thereby reducing the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. At least 30 minutes daily exercise is recommended, and this can be split into two if necessary. Exercise can be as simple and inexpensive as a walk, jog, and cycle or exercising at home.

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4-3-6 Keeping alert at work

There may be periods during shift work, especially early morning and night work, when it is difficult to keep alert. In such situations, engagement in light physical activity such as walking, standing, or stretching is recommended to maintain alertness.

4-4 Recommended Practices for Employer in View to Prevent Ill-Health and Injury during the Holy Month of Ramadan due to Work in Night and Shift Duties

Employers need to give due consideration on fasting workers' health status and adequate relaxations in duty hours as directed by legislation. In addition to above applicable controls mentioned.

Worker shall maintain adequate control on diet and shall take required rest and sleep as suitable to maintain individual's health status to cope up with night /shift work. In addition to above mentioned applicable self-control.

4-5 Ensuring Safe Work Zone during Night Work

In peak summer season, most of the employers reschedule their work for nighttime and this is apart from the regular night shift work (wherever essential) due to nature of business. This demands appropriate safe work zone management to prevent injuries and illness of workers when working during night shifts.

One of the major factors to ensure safety during night work, is to have appropriate arrangement of lighting at workplace, accordingly, following guidelines shall help in ensuring required illumination at workplace:

4-5-1 Nighttime work zone - illumination levels

Three categories are recommended below related to nighttime lighting guidelines for work zones for construction and other works:

Level 1: Illumination is important in areas where the work crew is in motion, moving from spot to spot. This level of luminance is appropriate for tasks requiring low accuracy, involving slow-moving equipment, and where there are large objects to be seen. The recommended average minimum-maintained luminance is 54 lux.

Level 2: Luminance is recommended for areas on or around construction equipment to provide a safer environment for the workers operating the equipment, allowing them to perform tasks that require a moderate level of accuracy. The recommended average minimum luminance is 108 lux.

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Level 3: Luminance is appropriate for those tasks that require a greater level of visibility or for tasks with a higher level of difficulty. The recommended average minimum illumination is 215 lux.

With not limiting to above recommendation, employers need to do required study to have appropriate and suitable illumination at such workplace to avoid glares and shadows and conduct work safely.

The following factors should be considered when selecting the types of lighting that are best suited for the work zone:

- Mobile work zone - the length of the work activity for one night may dictate either that the lighting plan be continuous for the length of the work zone or that a mobile system be used so that the lighting moves with the various work activities.
- Stationary work zones - work duration would determine the type of lighting in this situation. That is temporary movable fixtures or permanent fixtures if to be continued for long duration etc.
- Glare - glare from the lighting system should be minimized for both the workers and any adjacent motorist. Glare should be considered from each direction and on all approaching roadways and opposing lanes of traffic.
- Shadow - shadow could affect the operator's visibility and workers' movements and thus to be avoided. Inappropriate / insufficient lighting arrangements may result in shadows at work.

Assessment of lighting in the workplace should take account of the following aspects:

- The adequacy of artificial lighting, particularly where work equipment is in use;
- Procedure for measuring levels of illumination;
- The presence of glare in its various forms;
- The efficiency of light distribution;
- Lightning maintenance and cleaning arrangements; and
- Emergency lighting arrangements.

To ensure adequate and sufficient illumination at workplace, employers are recommended to prepare foolproof lighting plan and shall include following information as a minimum requirement:

- Lay out showing location of light towers, their spacing, lateral placement and mounting height and clearly showing the location of all lights necessary for all work to be done at night.
- Description of light towers, other attachments for the equipment, fixtures to be used and related power source.
- Specific technical details related to lighting equipment to be used.
- Information details of any hoods, louvers, shields or other means to be used to control glare.

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- Illumination lighting calculation confirming to the lay out requirement.

4-5-2 Other night work related control

It is recommended that no work to be scheduled for nighttime unless essential. When essential the employer must prepare night work safety plan accordingly to ensure organized safety control on the activity performed during nighttime. In addition to applicable general guidance mentioned above, following nighttime specific controls are recommended to be adopted at work as applicable;

- Provide facilities and opportunities for shift workers which are similar to those for daytime workers.
- Ensure that workplace lighting is adequate and adjustable as needed.
- Ensure that the workplace temperature is adjustable and allows workers to carry out work in a reasonably comfortable manner.
- Provision for increasing supervision during the period of low alertness in nighttime work.
- Ensure supervisors and team members with responsibility for shift working arrangements are aware of the risks of shift work and can recognize problems caused by shift work.
- Encourage interaction between workers on the same shift and provide a means of communication for lone workers (*note: avoid lone working during night or shift duty specifically when need to work in remote areas*)
- Ensure that the workplace and its surroundings are well lit and safe and secure so that night shift workers are not at risk of violence.
- While working on traffic roads or near to live traffic, traffic authority guidelines related to traffic signage, illumination, barriers to be adhered.
- Workplace signage / instruction posters shall be of reflective type or adequately illuminated to have clear visibility to workers working during nighttime and for stakeholders.

4-6 Training

- Industries/organisations where night and or shift work is in practice shall prepare training plan and implement it to ensure the required level of awareness is being created among the persons involved in this kind of duties.
- The training should cover the risk associated with night and shift duties and related control measures as specified in this guideline, recognize the health symptoms which may occur in individual while performing the work and necessity or schedule of health check-up (as needed), driving guidelines, emergency preparedness, security awareness.

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- The training is to be delivered by competent persons and contents of training must be verified by competent persons as well.
- This training can be given in various form such as induction; relevant essential job specific training and toolbox talks for workers if involved in night and shift duties.

4-7 Medical Screening of Workers

- In the emirate of Dubai night shift workers require health screening through a DHA-approved clinic to determine fitness for work and assess health impacts, including physical exams, blood tests for chronic conditions, and possibly specialized tests like ECG or spirometry, depending on the role. These periodic assessments, mandated to ensure worker well-being, help identify and monitor potential health problems like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and chronic chest conditions that may be aggravated by night work.
- There could be a pre-existing medical conditions by which night work could affect adversely. Considering this, it is recommended to conduct medical examination of individual prior to employment and there after periodic health assessment by registered medical practitioner (recommended: to be done every six months) to verify any adverse health effects of night or shift work on the individual's health.
- The follow up assessments are a form of health surveillance in that they seek to determine if the night work is having a detrimental effect on the night worker's health. The assessment must be covered by the employer and provided free of charge to the worker.
- Organization shall ensure availability of medical facility support, to ensure compliance with above mandatory screening. The record of the screening to be made available to DM inspectors on demand. (See Annex A, Register of workers' health status).

4-8 Emergency Preparedness

- All employers to ensure they have prepared to mitigate with all kinds of medical/ fire/traffic/security incidents / emergencies, which may arise in due course of night and shift work through training and ensuring all required resources are available.
- In case of lone working (please note that lone working is not to be encouraged unless essential and not avoidable) or limited resources during night or shift work, all workers to be made aware of dealing with such emergencies.
- Periodic drills related to applicable emergencies to be conducted as per legislation to be conducted.
- Remember to dial – 998 or 999 in case of any emergencies.

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4-9 Monitoring

Organizations may conduct periodic inspections/audits to verify implementation of these guidelines applicable to them.

Deviation from the required control may lead to health issues, absenteeism and incidents in the organization. Monitoring these indirect results with inspection/audit results will help in identifying the gap in the existing system.

Corrective and Preventive actions identified based on the guidance will result in improvising the situation and thus minimizing health issues and incidents in the organization due to night and shift work.

5 References

- Health and Safety Authority: Guidelines for Employers and workers for Night and Shift Work (UK)
- US Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration.

Annex: REGISTER OF WORKERS HEALTH STATUS

REGISTER OF WORKERS HEALTH STATUS								
Name of Worker	Designation	Date of Joining	Medical Status Prior to Joining	Current Medical Status	Next Medical Check-up Due On	Name of Health Center	Any Special Medical Condition	WORKER's Supervisor's Signature

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6 Suggestions, Comments & Complaints

For (suggestions, comments, and complaints)	For further information
- Unified interactive platform that connects Dubai Government and its customers: The 04 Platform https://04.gov.ae/ - Dubai Municipality - Call Center (24/7): 800900	Safety@dm.gov.ae - Dubai Municipality - Call Center (24/7): 800900