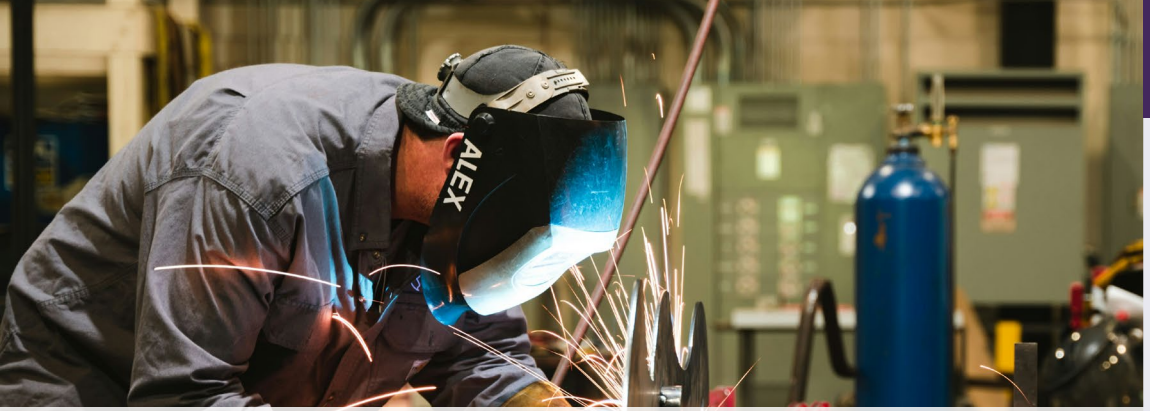

Worker Fatigue Early Warning Tool

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience

- Production Workers
- Machine Operators
- Assemblers
- Packing Operators
- Maintenance Technician
- Material Handlers

Description

This is a quick, pre-shift self-check is designed to help workers notice early signs of fatigue before starting work.

When to Use

Use this **before the start of each shift** or before beginning any safety-sensitive work.

WORKPLACE STRESS

Assembly line work can lead to high occupational stress due to demanding quotas, high physical strain, rotating shifts, overnights, and mandatory overtime. Fatigue can affect reaction time, attention, decision-making, and physical coordination, even when someone feels “mostly fine.” Because of this, small decreases in sleep quality, alertness, or physical comfort can increase the risk of mistakes or injury on the job.

This tool uses a simple 3-question score to help identify fatigue early so workers and supervisors can take appropriate action before starting a shift.

THE PRACTICE

Before starting work, rate each item below on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Sleep quality last night

Number

1 Very Poor | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Excellent

Current alertness

Number

1 Very Tired | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Fully Alert

Physical soreness

Number

1 Very Sore | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 No Sore

Add the three numbers together for a total score.

WHY THIS HELPS

Fatigue builds gradually and is often underestimated. Poor sleep, low alertness, or body soreness can reduce focus and slow reaction time. In work environments that require attention, physical effort, or safety awareness, even mild fatigue can increase risk.

A quick self-screen helps make fatigue visible so it can be managed early instead of ignored.

SCORE & ACTION

3–5: Average Range

- You are generally well-rested and ready for work
- Proceed with normal duties

6–9: Moderate Fatigue

- Mild fatigue may be present
- Take extra care during tasks
- Increase hydration
- Use microbreaks when possible
- Stay aware of attention and focus levels

0–15: High Fatigue

- Significant fatigue is present
- Do not ignore symptoms
- Check in with a supervisor before starting work
- Discuss possible adjustments or support options
- Consider whether rest or task modification is needed

WHY THIS WORKS

- **Fatigue reduces reaction time and focus.**
  Tired workers may miss important details or respond more slowly.
- **Small levels of fatigue can still affect safety.**
  Even mild tiredness can increase risk in physical or repetitive tasks.
- **Early awareness prevents errors and injuries.**
  Identifying fatigue before work starts allows safer decisions.
- **Self-checks support better planning.**
  Workers can adjust effort, pacing, or break frequency based on need.
- **Proactive screening improves overall workplace safety.**
  Addressing fatigue early helps reduce accidents and supports long term well-being.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org

Looking to go deeper? Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community. Check out the website here for additional details.

Sources:
This tool was informed by research on occupational fatigue risk, including work by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and fatigue monitoring tools such as the Karolinska Sleepiness Scale.