



1 Nov. 2024: The Greater Manchester Hazards Centre supports the findings from unions to improve the health and safety of night-time workers. The new report, [\*Health and Safety Impacts of Night Working\*](#) was recently published by the TUC and five major UK unions. The full report can be found [here](#) but in its conclusion it comes up with 8 recommendations to help protect night-time and shift workers.

## 8 recommendations to reduce health risks for night-time workers

### 1. Risk assessments and health monitoring



Adoption of robust fatigue risk management systems (FRMS) for all those doing night work, including fatigue risk assessments, non-punitive fatigue reporting systems, confidential staff fatigue surveys and physical and mental health support at the workplace during working hours. To complement this; union health and safety representatives must be resourced and supported in educating workers about fatigue, how to navigate the fatigue assessment processes, and the assessment and interventions required to manage psychosocial risks. Employers should be carrying out health monitoring for night workers, on account of the health risks, and to help with earlier diagnosis of problems.

### 2. Higher pay for night work



The value of night-work premia should be reassessed to ensure that it compensates for the physical and mental toll of night-work and disruption to family and social life. At national level unions could consider pushing for a mandatory minimum premium for working nights.

### 3. Stronger regulation



HSE and ORR guidance on shift work and night shifts needs stronger enforcement across workplaces, especially in safety-critical industries. These guidelines refer to: lengths of shifts, length of blocks of night shifts, number of recovery days following night shifts; avoiding slow rotations and backwards rotations of shifts; avoiding excessive overtime; ensuring adequate meal breaks and comfortable rest facilities; minimum time off between shifts; addressing fatigue in relation to safe commuting; avoidance, where possible, of permanent night-shifts. For theatre workers employers are required under health and safety legislation to provide safe exits from venues and this needs stronger enforcement.

#### 4. More time for recovery



A review of the number and timing of recovery days, including the current HSE minimum of 12 hours between shifts to ensure they are sufficient to enable recovery from night shifts. The effects of sleep deprivation and circadian rhythm misalignment are cumulative, and recovery time should align with the number of days in blocks of night shifts, should follow night shifts, and be sufficient to ensure recovery before shift changes. Rest periods between shifts should permit sufficient time for commuting, meals and sleep. There is a case to be made for employer contributions to recovery time, such as paid recovery

leave days or extra annual leave.

#### 5. More say for workers



Greater effective worker control of rosters and shift patterns would ameliorate some of the negative impacts of night work for workers and the 6 managerial imposition of changes to established shift patterns avoided. The option for individual rosters is especially important for those with dependent children and older workers. Workers should have the right to transfer from night-work to other shifts on a temporary and permanent basis and/or to reduce the number of shifts they work.

#### 6. Protection for older workers



Workers have reduced tolerance for shift work and experience increased problems with sleep and related conditions as they age. There is a case for workers to have a right to move from night work onto day work from the age of 50, or before in the case of poor health and that regimes of night work adjusted to accommodate the impact of ageing.

#### 7. Avoiding late lone working



Lone working during night shifts should be avoided, or (at a minimum) suitable support provided to ensure the physical and psychological safety of workers, and those travelling alone to and from the workplace late at night should be supported to make safe journeys.

#### 8. Time off and rest breaks



Night-shift workers should have the right to time off work to make and attend medical appointments as well as for domestic responsibilities and emergencies. Workers must also be enabled to take the meal breaks that they are due, and employers should ensure that healthy and hot food be provided for night workers, along with clean and suitable social spaces and quiet areas. Employers should ensure parity of facilities between day and night workers, for example access to toilets and kitchens.