

Appendix 8: Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Fatigue	Fatigue is a physiological state where someone is unable to mentally and physically function at their best.
Permanent shifts	Permanent shifts have start and finish times that do not change from day to day. That is, the worker always starts and finishes work at the same time. They may also be called fixed shifts, regular shifts, or non-rotating shifts.
Rotating shifts	Workers on a rotating shift system are assigned to shifts where the start and finish times change over time. These are called 'rotating shifts' because workers move from one shift to another and the shifts rotate around the clock. They may rotate in a forward direction (for example, morning shift to afternoon shift to night shift) or backward direction (for example, afternoon shift to morning shift to night shift). The rotation may be fast (for example, every 1-3 days) or slower (for example, every week). Workers usually take turns working on all shifts that are part of a rotating shift system.
Shift system	The term shift system describes the characteristics of a pattern of work in an organisation. It may include one type or different types of shifts, including permanent shifts, rotating shifts, variable shifts and split shifts. A shift system is described by its different components, including but not limited to shift type, length, timing and rotation, as well as breaks between and within shifts, workload and task assignment, and work predictability and flexibility. A shift system can be continuous (that is, running shifts that cover all 24 hours of the day) or semi-continuous (for example, running two or three shifts per day, with or without weekend work).
Sleep debt	A sleep debt occurs when a person gets less sleep than they need, and can be calculated as the difference between the amount of sleep a person needs and the amount they actually get. A sleep debt builds up if a person does not get enough, good quality sleep night after night. A sleep debt can lead to poorer functioning and health, with a higher sleep debt resulting in a greater impact on functioning and health.
Sleep inertia	Sleep inertia is a temporary feeling of sleepiness and confusion, that is often experienced alongside poor functioning, and that occurs immediately after waking from sleep. Sleep inertia is worse when a person has not been getting enough sleep (has a sleep debt), wakes during the night time, and/or wakes from deep sleep. The experience of sleep inertia is different from person to person and usually lasts for up to 15-30 minutes. In some cases, sleep inertia can be severe and last for up to two hours.
Split shifts	A split shift is where a person's workday is split into two or more parts separated by a long break. For example, a worker might work from 6-10am and then return to work from 2-9pm on the same day. A regular meal break does not count as a 'split' in a person's workday. A typical split shift has work that is separated by two or more hours.
Unrestricted sleep	Unrestricted sleep occurs when a person can get into bed when they feel sleepy in the evening and sleep during the night for as long as they need to, until they wake naturally in the morning (without an alarm).
Variable shifts	Variable shifts are shifts with different lengths (and start and end times) on different days. For example, working a 10-hour shift on Day 1 from 9am-7pm and working a 6 hour shift on Day 2 from 11am-5pm. Variable shifts often mean a worker does not have regular pattern of work.