

**April 24, 2002**

## **Running On All Cylinders**

Working at our jobs is just one of many activities most of us do in a day. We take care of our families, play sports, do volunteer work and go out with friends.

That's why it's all too easy to arrive at work too tired to do our best. Fatigue affects more than our productivity; it can also jeopardize safety.

You are responsible for starting work in good shape, awake, alert and ready to focus on your job. Mistakes and accidents can happen if you aren't in good mental and physical condition. Tired workers have crashed vehicles, reached into moving machinery, missed urgent monitor alarms and even fallen asleep in the path of heavy equipment.

So how do you spend the time and energy required for the other parts of your life and still have enough left over for your work shift.

### **Consider these suggestions:**

- Put your own physical and mental health at the top of your list. Give yourself the nutritious food, regular exercise and the rest and recreation you need.
- Get enough sleep. Most adults require about eight hours sleep every 24 hours but individual needs vary. If it takes you nine hours to wake up feeling okay, then you should try to sleep for nine hours. Researchers have discovered young adults really do need to sleep longer and later than children or older adults do.
- If you are a working parent, a full night's sleep could seem like a distant dream. You might stay up late and get up early to look after cooking, laundry, cleaning and

childcare. But here's something to consider: Who would look after your family if you were injured or killed in an accident caused by fatigue?

- If you suffer from sleeplessness because of shift changes or stress, develop some better sleep strategies. Try to go to bed at the same time each night (or day). Cut down on caffeine as your sleep period approaches. Make your sleeping area as dark, quiet and comfortable as possible. Close the drapes, turn off the phone and turn on the air conditioning if you need to.
- If fatigue is dragging you down and you don't know why, get a medical checkup to see if it is being caused by a physical illness. Fatigue is an effect of depression too, so seek help if you have this common and treatable condition.
- Activity can energize you. Dozing on the couch in front of television reruns won't necessarily make you feel ready to tackle the world, but getting up and doing something might. And it's the same at work, where walking an inspection beat will keep you awake better than sitting in front of a monitor.

**Safety Tip: Take care of yourself to prevent the fatigue that can get you hurt on the job or on your commute. Make sure you are firing on all cylinders as you head in to your work shift.**