



## Making Shift-Work A More Positive Experience

With today's fast-paced society and its demand on service and products at almost any time of night, shift-work has become a usual occurrence affecting many aspects of our lives. Many companies simply have to have shift-work in place for their company to survive. This can be due to many factors, such as processes that cannot be shut down, processes that take longer than the normal 8-hour workday, or product demand, which is too high to be met by just one daily shift.

Shift-work affects about 15.5 million workers in the United States. Employers must become more aware of how alternate work schedules affect their employees both physically and mentally. Working long or unaccustomed hours can make employees overly tired, making concentration difficult that can result in an increase in injury or error. Digestive problems, heart problems, and stresses from interference with family and social life have also been shown to be associated with shift-work. Employers can make shift-work better for employees by making sure to look at the following aspects of their shift-work system:

- Be conscience of the accumulated length of each employee's work shift. Remember that the difference of two hours between an 8 hour shift and a 10 hour shift literally adds up to a full extra week of work for the employee per month.
- Look at the shifting cycle. Extending the cycle to a longer period of time allows our bodies to adjust easier to the change in our normal pattern of work.
- Try to supply workers with nutritious and appealing food in either your cafeteria or vending areas.
- Giving employees a work area with plenty of fresh air and bright lights is helpful in keeping them alert and in turn, safer on the job.
- Schedule heavy or demanding work at times when workers are most alert or at their peak performance.
- Provide training or awareness programs for new shift-workers and their families.
- Provide health care and counseling services to employees who work non-traditional work hours.

In order to avoid some of the stresses that shift-work places on employees, the employer and their employees must work together as a team to follow these guidelines to make alternative work-shifts a positive experience for everyone.

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