

“Have I had enough sleep?”

We're all different, but most adults need 7 to 9 hours sleep per night on a regular basis for optimal health and performance. Occasionally you may not manage to get this, and wonder “Have I had enough sleep?” You may feel OK when you book-on, but it's hard to tell how tired you're likely to become through the whole of your shift. Here are some rough guidelines. Everyone's different, and many things affect fatigue - you may be too tired even within these guidelines. If in doubt, put safety first - tell your supervisor immediately, and don't put yourself or others at risk.

- Your performance is likely to be impaired:
 - If you've had less than 6 hours' sleep in the previous 24 hours
 - If you've had less than 12 hours' sleep in the previous 48 hours
 - When you've been awake longer than your total sleep in the previous 48 hours (up to a maximum of 16 hours, whichever is the lower)

Important note: these are rough rules-of-thumb, not “limits to work up to”. Fatigue is complex and varies significantly between individuals – a “safe” amount of sleep for one person may not be enough for someone else. The rules-of-thumb do not account for such individual differences. Other factors affect fatigue e.g. sleep quality, general health & well-being, the nature of the tasks & working environment, and time of day/night. Awareness of rough guidelines like these may nevertheless have prevented incidents where, for whatever reason, people did not get enough sleep but thought they would be OK...