

Are They Up to Snuff?

Our Team Resource Management course includes a section on defining and applying professionalism. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) believes professionalism is important to safe operations, and Pipeline Performance Group does too.

The U.S. Department of Labor defines professionalism as “conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability and excellence.” It is therefore, the responsibility of the professional to report for duty clear-minded, ready to adhere to rules and procedures and prepared and organized for the shift. Being well rested is the foundation of all other components relating to professionalism. It’s difficult to maintain a standard of excellence when you’re mentally and physically fatigued.

There may be occasions when you or a co-worker is unavoidably working with a tired mind and/or a tired body. Fatigue is simply a complicating factor of being human. How can you overcome fatigue? The only true remedy for fatigue is sleep. Sleep, like your job, must be a priority in your daily schedule in order for you to report “fit for duty”.



There are some things we can do when we find ourselves in the unfortunate place of fatigue while on shift. If you have a console that rises, stand for a while as you monitor the pipeline. Shift your weight from one leg to the other to force stabilizer muscles to work, which also activates certain neurons in the brain to fire. Take a break and walk outside, when possible. Stretch arms overhead and breathe deeply. Exhale as you slowly lower arms to your side. Lift your chin while stretching arms open and back to stretch the chest. Breathe deeply and exhale slowly while stretching. The combination of movement, stretching and deep breathing accelerates blood flow and oxygen saturation in the tissues.

If you notice a co-worker getting sleepy or nodding off, you can help them by striking up a conversation. Talking and listening may be enough to stimulate the brain to a greater sense of alertness. Share a cup of coffee or another caffeinated beverage with your co-worker. Water and a snack can be helpful in the effort to stay alert.

As a team player and professional, you hold an important responsibility for reporting to work alert and able to execute your duties. You also have a responsibility to ensure safety of the pipeline operations in your control room. Your company may have a formal procedure to follow if you believe a fellow Controller is overly fatigued, or otherwise unable to fulfill the roles and responsibilities assigned by the Company. Familiarize yourself with these procedures in your control room. You might also refer to a Fatigue Observations Checklist to help evaluate your fatigue levels, or to assess the fatigue levels of others.

Be a positive leader on your team by taking care of yourself and encouraging others in their efforts. Include these goals to get started:

- Make sleep a priority in your day
- Stay hydrated – aim for at least 2 liters of water a day
- Eat nutritiously dense foods that meet your body’s needs
- Move for a minimum of 20 minutes a day
- Be a continual learner