



Confidential
Reporting
for Safety

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Frontline *Matters*

ISSUE 9 January 2020

How to fight daily stress to stay safe at work

Follow our tips for surviving modern life and
staying safe

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Speaking up for health, wellbeing and safety

Editor's note

New year, new start.

The days may still be short, and the evenings dark and long, but those new year's resolutions may carry us along for a few weeks with some new goals – at least until the end of the month!

If you're driving on wintry roads, with safety in mind, remember to allow a little more time for your journey than usual.

Our reports continue to reflect the broad range of health and safety concerns of transport workers.

This time round our reports cover: the importance of work-life balance where long commutes to site are involved, the need for the safe dispatch of trains on curved platforms, and the challenge of having multiple contractors on site.

In this edition, we also have two feature articles: one on beating stress and the other on distraction.

Both subjects are important if we want to work safely and with our full attention.

It's good to notice and manage symptoms of stress, on both the physical and mental side.

Going one step further, once we've spotted these, there are lots of positive coping strategies we can put into practice well before we end up being burned out.

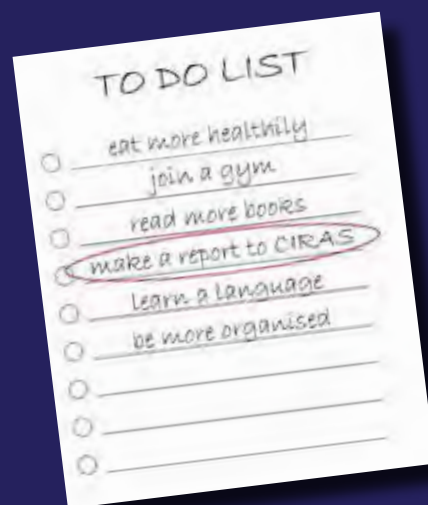
Distraction often features in our reports as a potential cause of safety related incidents.

If we want to beat distraction, we have our work cut out just switching off all the technology that now beats a path into heads.

You'll find some useful tips included within these pages to do just that.

Many of our readers will have been working to upgrade and keep transport systems moving over the festive period.

As always, if anything concerns you about how health, wellbeing or safety is managed in your workplace then please speak up.



You can make a confidential report in a number of ways:

- **Report hotline** 0800 4 101 101
- **Freepost** CIRAS
- **Text** 07507 285 887
- www.ciras.org.uk

For further information on any of the items in *Frontline Matters* and any feedback, please email us at: editor@ciras.org.uk.

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How to fight daily stress to stay safe at work

Our practical tips will help you reduce your stress levels and stay calm under pressure or if you find yourself struggling



We all get stressed sometimes. What's important is what we do to release that stress by taking action.

***“...tips to reduce your stress to manageable levels if you find yourself struggling.*”**

This can guard against the long-term effects of mental or physical ill-health.

Follow these practical tips to reduce your stress to manageable levels if you find yourself struggling.

Breathe deeply

One simple strategy for overcoming a stressful situation is to take a few deep breaths.

It's a powerful way of lowering your heart rate, blood pressure and stress hormones.

Breathe in slowly through your nose. Aim to completely fill your lungs.

Hold your breath for a few seconds, then breathe out through your mouth.

Repeat three or four times.

You'll probably notice a calming effect.

Exercise

A bit of aerobic exercise will get your heart rate up.

See if you can find just 20 minutes a day for a brisk walk, a swim, or some cycling (cyclists are 40 per cent less stressed than other commuters according to one study).

“Fuel your body with a balanced diet to maintain your health...”

You'll find exercise boosts those brain chemicals, endorphins, and improves your mood.

It will also have a calming effect on your mind and lower those stress hormones.

Eat well

Fuel your body with a balanced diet to maintain your health and build resilience to stress.

Include fruit, vegetables, and whole grains in your diet.

Foods rich in vitamin C, such as oranges and grapefruits, can help lower your stress hormones too.

Omega-3 found in salmon and other fatty fish, as well as nuts and seeds, may also have a calming effect.

If you fancy something sweet, dark chocolate can do the same.

Engage in positive self-talk

We're all guilty of making a stressful situation worse sometimes by being negative about our own efforts.

But rather than add insult to injury, try turning those negative statements into positive ones.

Change 'I can't do this' into 'I know I can do this'.

Or try saying: 'There's something I can learn from that', rather than 'That went badly'.

“ ...try turning those negative statements into positive ones.

Learn to relax

In theory, everyone knows they need to relax sometimes.

But in the midst of a busy schedule relaxation often slips down the agenda, allowing us too little time to recover from work.

Often, the root cause is not giving ourselves permission to relax in the first place.

So give yourself permission to switch off, and then do something you know works for you.

“ Most of us will recognise when we're feeling 'stressed out'.

Grab a tennis racket and hit the court, jump on a mountain bike, pick up a brush and paint, or have a warm bath to relax.

Why do we get stressed?

Most of us will recognise when we're feeling 'stressed out'.

Neighbours blasting out music next door, a driver cutting you up on the road, your boss yelling - all these things can raise your stress levels and put you on high alert.

But why should we feel that way when most of the things we encounter in our daily routines are not actually a threat to life or limb?

The answer lies in our evolutionary history.

“ The problem in our modern lives is that the nature of the threats is often psychological...

Our minds and bodies have not evolved that much since the time we were hunter gatherers.

Back then, we had to fend off threats to our physical survival from bears,



wolves, or a hostile member of a rival tribe.

These situations would induce a 'fight or flight' stress response.

But once the threat had passed, our bodies would return to their natural resting state.

The problem in our modern lives is that the nature of the threats is often psychological, and we can't just switch them off.

The sources of our stress are unlikely to change overnight, because we are stuck with our neighbours or a difficult commute.

And we don't have much control over what other people do – it is this lack of control over the environment that can cause our stress levels to increase.

“ ...draw up a list of the things we can control, and a list of the things we can't.

In practice, this means that our stress response system may keep on getting activated.

We may never quite achieve that resting state like we once did in the age of the hunter gatherer.

But by recognising the symptoms of stress and following some of the tips provided here, we can fight stress and guard against its long-term effects better.

“ Try reporting it to someone who can do something...

One helpful tip here is to draw up a list of the things we can control, and a list of the things we can't.

As a rule, if we stick to working on the things that we have more control over, we'll end up feeling happier.

We may not be able to change what other people say or do, but we can make a choice to take action ourselves.

Is something bothering you at work that you can't fix yourself?

Try reporting it to someone who can do something rather than let it cause you stress.

If your concern relates to health, wellbeing or safety and you don't feel able to raise it internally then remember that CIRAS is here to help.

This way, you may be able to influence the situation because companies often take action when we send on your concerns.

Electrical switch room cleared at Reading train care depot

Concern raised about storage arrangements results in permanent solution and regular checks



© Great Western Railway. All items have been removed from the switch room.

Concern

A reporter has raised an ongoing safety concern regarding the use of the main electrical switch room to store equipment and other various items at Reading Train Care depot.

“ Many items stored are said to be combustibles...”

According to the reporter, storing items in this room is unsafe due to the nature of the room (being the main switch room with many electrical components).

Many items stored are said to be combustibles and so pose a potential fire hazard - for example, there are two petrol driven water pumps stored in the room.

The reporter expresses concern that should an electrical fire start in the switch room, these items would make the fire worse, making it difficult to put out.

They also pose an additional hazard by hindering the escape route should

employees need to leave the room quickly.

The reporter asked Great Western Railway (GWR) to:

- remove items that are currently stored in the switch room which should not be there?
- carry out monitoring on a quarterly basis to ensure the room is kept clear?

Great Western Railway's response

GWR thanks the reporter for raising these concerns.

“ All items have been removed from the switch room and placed in the stores...”

Planned general inspections and safety tours are in place already, but will now focus more on these areas and general housekeeping.

The root cause is that when the depot was built insufficient room for storage was provided.

This has been made worse by the closing of Old Oak common depot, resulting in tools and equipment being transferred from Old Oak to Reading.

“ A plant workshop extension has been built to give increased space for tooling and equipment.”

Actions taken

All items have been removed from the switch room and placed in the stores.

A plant workshop extension has been built to give increased space for tooling and equipment.

Items currently in the stores will be sorted out to go into the new building.

Short-term and long-term solutions considered:

- items placed in temporary storage
- items will be placed in the new extension when finished
- safety tours and inspection implemented and ongoing for this area.

Investigation identifies improvement opportunities at depot

CIRAS report sparks comprehensive review of hazards, competencies and the working environment

Concern

A reporter has raised a concern regarding unsafe practices at Willesden Junction depot which are said to have been going on for over a year.

It is believed that rules and procedures are not being followed.

The examples given are a disregard for depot speed limits and not reporting operational incidents.

“ It is believed that rules and procedures are not being followed.

Additionally, the reporter believes employees are carrying out roles which they may not be competent for.

The reporter is concerned that this may result in employee injuries or operational incidents.

Bombardier are asked if they could:

- ensure employees and contractors are following the rules and procedures when operating in Willesden Junction depot? This applies to following speed limits, reporting incidents and undertaking the correct roles.
- consider carrying out a site audit to ensure rules and procedures are being followed adequately?

Bombardier's response

Safety is Bombardier's number one priority.

One of our company's key strategic priorities is to keep our staff, contractors, customers, users of our products and visitors safe and to reduce our environmental impact.

We aim to establish a zero-tolerance culture where exceptions to safe behaviour and safe workplaces are not accepted. This has been globally branded as “Safety – No Exceptions”.



© Mattbuck. Willesden Junction.

We arranged an independent investigation by a member of the UK Health, Safety & Environment team into the concerns raised.

The key findings are summarised below.

Sampling of local practices

A random sample of activities took place at the depot.

“ Safety is Bombardier's number one priority.

The work observed included four pieces of modification work to rail vehicles carried out within the maintenance shed by the local team and operatives from a separate Bombardier division, and upgrade works to train access platforms in the sidings and the pit board system within the maintenance shed, both carried out by external contractors.

The significant hazards associated with the rail vehicle works were falls from

height, train-borne electrical hazards and train movement hazards, which are addressed by the depot's core safety procedures.

“ One of our company's key strategic priorities is to keep our staff safe and to reduce our environmental impact.

A high level of compliance with the mandatory controls documented in these procedures was evident, in addition to which all operatives were compliant with the depot's mandatory personal protective equipment (PPE) standard.

No remedial actions were necessary with respect to the observed working practices.

Minor non-conformances with respect to details on the 'Control of Contractors Board' and the management of Permits To Work were identified, which are being addressed.

Monitoring of the working environment

The depot's system of continuous monitoring of the working environment to identify unsafe acts and conditions was also examined.

In 2019, 148 safety tours and ad-hoc checks have been carried out by 51 people including the UK Heads of Operations and HSE.

It is mandatory for each member of the local management team to carry out one safety tour or ad-hoc check per month which should include a safety discussion and examine a particular topic in detail where possible. The management team has completed 67 so far and is meeting its target.

The safety tour system is functioning as intended and no remedial action is required.

During the audit, it was found a vehicle had been let through the gates that morning, so CCTV of the vehicle's entry to the depot was reviewed.

***“...exceptions to safe behaviour and safe workplaces are not accepted.*”**

Whilst it was not possible to determine its exact speed (the limit is 5mph), the vehicle was clearly travelling within its stopping distance given the environment (car park) and was under control.

Depot reporting

The depot's system for documenting hazards and near misses was examined for speeding incidents - one was found, dated 2018, which was addressed through the implementation of a booking system for deliveries.

When asked, the security guard stated that there had been instances of speeding, but these are now infrequent.

It seems likely that there have been instances of vehicles exceeding depot speed limits that have not been reported, logged and addressed.

With respect to the concern over incidents going unreported, the depot's system for reporting and documenting near miss and hazard reporting data as well as other reporting channels were examined.



© Mattbuck. Willesden Junction.

Since 2016, the depot has reported 317 hazards and near misses and shows a closure rate of 95%.

Nine accidents were reported, all of which were 'minor'.

Staff are asked to report all hazards, near misses and accidents.

Posters are available providing guidance on their classification, reporting and escalation in line with both UK and corporate requirements.

In addition, 'shop floor' safety meetings led by the Shift Manager and supported by the wider management team take place three times per week to give staff an additional opportunity to report health and safety issues and track progress of remedial actions.

Reporting cards are available in the foyer to facilitate anonymous reporting.

***“ Staff are asked to report all hazards, near misses and accidents.*”**

The depot has a transparent system for reporting health and safety issues, which a wide range of staff continue to make use of.

Competency of employees

Examination of the system confirms that no individual has an expired

competency and that the system enables training and competency issues to be actively managed to prevent this happening.

The system is supported by regular meetings between the depot and Training and Competency department, to ensure that training and competency requirements are identified, communicated and planned in.

***“ Reporting cards are available in the foyer to facilitate anonymous reporting.*”**

The shift roster and local training matrix enable the depot to plan resources effectively, ensuring sufficient staff with the necessary competencies are 'rostered on'.

Other actions taken

- A review into how the Control of Contractors Board is administered has been arranged.
- A briefing has been issued to all staff reminding them that instances of road vehicles speeding in the depot are examples of near misses and if seen, must be reported as soon as possible to enable suitable action to be taken.

Rosters checked to ensure sufficient competent staff on duty

Balfour Beatty puts plan into place to audit a subcontract labour supplier and run spot checks on staff competency

Concern

A reporter is concerned that work carried out by Balfour Beatty's Integrated Track Team and its subcontractors is potentially unsafe.

On several occasions since April 2019, the reporter has observed the incorrect operation of equipment, such as iron men, and the incorrect handling of oxygen tanks used for welding.

This is believed to arise because of a lack of competent staff booked for the engineering works.

“...the reporter has observed the incorrect operation of equipment...”

An additional risk raised is that employees from the three subcontractors mentioned do not have valid competencies to operate the equipment.

Should these unsafe practices go unnoticed, it could result in an operational incident or injuries.

Balfour Beatty is asked if they could:

- ensure future works carried out by the ITT are done safely?
- carry out an audit on the three subcontractors?

Balfour Beatty's response

We take health and safety issues very seriously on the Integrated Track Team and looks for every opportunity to improve and have investigated the concern raised.

In addition to this, we have enhanced our own reporting systems to make it easier and clearer for our staff to raise these issues with us directly – this can be done anonymously.

Feedback from our staff will help us to improve.



© Balfour Beatty. Oxygen tanks.

Rectifying health and safety issues will encourage further engagement between operatives and management.

“...to ensure the right level of operatives are rostered for moving rail...”

An internal review was carried out on all jobs delivered since April 2019 to establish if the correct amount of staff had been rostered for the activity as per the programme of works.

Focussing on the iron man activity, the roster shows there was sufficient labour rostered on each weekend to move the rail on site safely using the iron men, as per the work instruction.

We are aware of at least one incident where oxygen gas bottles were carried incorrectly.

The practice, on that occasion, was stopped and the correct method of working adopted.

We recognise that manual handling of gas bottles presents a risk.

Actions taken

- The rosters will be checked by the Senior Construction Manager to

ensure the right level of operatives are rostered for moving rail at the planning stage. Any discrepancies are to be addressed prior to the work activity commencing.

- Review of the subcontractors' competency matrix during the planning stages.

“Random spot checks on subcontractor competencies to ensure compliance.”

- As part of the projects audit programme for 2019, the plan is to audit (as a minimum) one subcontract labour supplier during the year. Part of the audit will cover the supplier's competency for the staff they supply to the project.
- Random spot checks on subcontractor competencies to ensure compliance.
- We are looking to eliminate the risk of working with iron men by mechanising the process. We have an innovation work stream that is concentrating on this and we hope to see results in the next six months.

Conductors rebriefed on dispatch observation at Busby Station

Abellio ScotRail in talks with Network Rail regarding fitting an OFF indicator on the platform



© Hassocks5489. Busby station.

Concern

A reporter has raised a concern over the safety of dispatching services from the Glasgow bound platform at Busby station, on the East Kilbride line.

This platform is curved, and therefore the platform starting signal is out of view for conductors.

The reporter is aware that conductors are advised to rely on drivers to check the signal, rather than walk down the platform, as this can cause delays.

However, the reporter is concerned that this process is leading to dispatch ambiguity as usually conductors hold sole responsibility.

“...the platform starting signal is out of view for conductors.

On platforms with similar issues, OFF indicators are often implemented to mitigate the risk of a signal passed at danger (SPAD).

Abellio Scotrail are asked if they could:

- talk to Network Rail about an OFF indicator on the platform for conductors?
- clarify the correct way to dispatch services from the Glasgow bound platform at Busby Station, including who holds responsibility for dispatch?

Abellio ScotRail's response

We would like to thank the reporter for raising their concerns.

“...it is also the Driver's responsibility to dispatch trains safely...

There is a local dispatch instruction for this platform which is as follows:

After arriving, the conductor will undertake platform train interface (PTI) and train dispatch duties from the optimal intermediate position of the platform/train as stated in the train dispatch risk assessment.

After closing the train doors and ensuring the platform is clear, they will give the driver two rings on the bell buzzer indicating that station work is complete and the train is ready so start.

It is then the driver's responsibility to check that the remote starting signal is displaying the correct aspect before departing the station.

ID plates are fitted so that the driver can phone the signaller if the previous signal is displaying a cautionary aspect.

“All conductors are fully trained and assessed on the dispatch process for this location and route.

Conductors do not have sole responsibility at any location for dispatching trains as it is also the driver's responsibility to dispatch trains safely as per the Rule Book.

However, we are currently in discussions with Network Rail regarding the feasibility of fitting an OFF indicator on the platform, as suggested by the reporter, as we see this having both safety and performance benefits.

“...a group email will be sent to conductors reminding them of the dispatch procedure.

Actions taken

The Conductor Team Manager went to Busby station to observe dispatch process.

All conductors are fully trained and assessed on the dispatch process for this location and route.

However, a group email will be sent to conductors reminding them of the dispatch procedure for Busby station Glasgow bound platform.

Work-life balance highlighted after review of travel times

Staff actively encouraged to provide feedback in relation to 14-hour door-to-door policy



FEEDBACK CARD

Have Safety Documents in Place

☐

Control Our Work Areas

☐

Prevent Service Damage

☐

Operate Plant Safely

☐

Protect Our Health

☐

Protect The Environment

☐

Who are you?

☐ Operative

☐ Supervisor

☐ Manager

☐ Director

☐ Subcontractor

☐ Client

☐ Staff

☐ Other

MURPHY

WORLD-CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE

FEEDBACK CARD

FEEDBACK ☐ CLOSE CALLS ☐ NEAR MISS ☐

YOU SUGGESTED THOUGHTS YOU HAVE SEEN

WHAT IS YOUR SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

ACTION TAKEN

Site/Office name:

Date:

Name:

Date observed call:

© J Murphy & Son's. Feedback cards available on sites.

Concern

A reporter has raised a concern regarding long travel times for employees, believing this to be a company-wide issue affecting multiple sites.

According to the reporter, employees are being rostered to travel up to three hours to sites.

They then complete a 12-hour shift, before travelling the three-hour journey home.

“...employees are being rostered to travel up to three hours to sites.

On occasion employees are provided with accommodation, but this is not always the case.

The reporter expresses concern this could put employees at risk of fatigue,

potentially leading to road traffic incidents when travelling to and from sites.

If employees are feeling fatigued, this could also lead to operational incidents or injuries during safety critical work.

Can J Murphy & Sons:

- review and audit employee rosters, including travel times, to ensure that employees are working within 14 hours door-to-door policy?
- provide accommodation for employees who will exceed 14 hours door-to-door?

J Murphy & Sons’ response

J Murphy & Sons Ltd would like to thank the individual for raising this potential concern, but we would also

like to remind them of the internal reporting processes we have in place, which are fully supported by our Senior Leadership Team to address any issues.

“Employees should be able to do their jobs properly without the need to work very long hours...

We actively encourage all staff to feed back any concerns they have using our feedback cards, which are available on all of our sites - these can be left anonymously if preferred.

These cards are then reviewed and actioned appropriately.

We are committed to ensuring so far as practicable that staff working hours will be managed such that employees do not suffer injury, ill health or any other detrimental impact through working excessive hours.

Employees should be able to do their jobs properly without the need to work very long hours, except in rare instances.

We further believe that it is in everybody's interests that staff take their full allocation of annual leave and not accumulate significant amounts of untaken leave.

“ ...hotels with local facilities are booked to help promote a healthy work life balance.

Following the issue raised, a review of current legislation, Network Rail guidelines and internal company policies and processes was undertaken and we can confirm the following:

As part of our resource strategy our site teams are requested and mobilised from a pool of cross sector trained direct labour workforce, which are allocated to works by matching up their skill set versus closest to home jobs.

This balance gives us UK coverage that benefits both our staff and our client and limits the amount of travel time.

Wherever possible, hotels with local facilities (e.g. gym) are booked to help promote a healthy work life balance.

We also try to book our sites teams at the same hotel, and then if required, we can also provide transport for everyone in the form of a minibus.

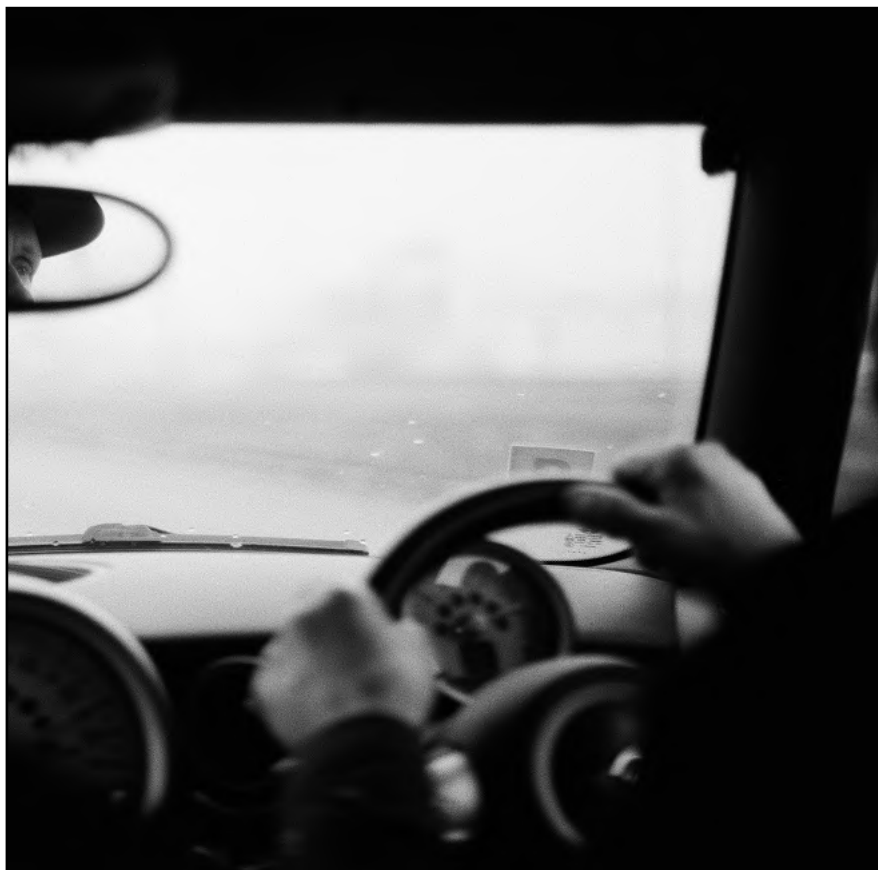
Upon arrival at sites, all staff must sign in and complete the required fields to confirm travel time, 12 hours' rest and fitness to start duty.

When leaving site again, staff must sign out confirming hours worked, travel time and fitness to leave site.

The use of the Sentinel app is also promoted within our sites and on training courses, and again this feature prompts for working hours and travel time.

A review of all sign in sheets is undertaken on a regular basis and no exceedances have been shown.

On the rare occasion when works and or travel exceed allowed standards, we have a fully documented and risk assessed exceedance process to be followed and accepted.



© Photo by Gatis Murnieks on Unsplash.

We would like to thank the reporter for their comments and hope that our response addresses the concerns raised.

Following this report, we have investigated and reviewed the following processes:

Close Call System

Nothing reported on the Murphy internal or RSSB external platforms.

CDP Feedback Cards

Nothing reported to our Culture Development Programme Team using either paperwork feedback cards, the app or website.

SHESQ Inspections

Nothing identified during our Safety, Health, Environmental, Sustainability and Quality Inspections including reports and close out actions.

“ ...it is a great reminder to engage with both office and site staff...

Resource

Liaison with operations directors who engaged with project directors to liaise with their site teams to review any

issues of this nature being reported by internal or agency staff.

Nothing has been reported into our Operations or Resource Teams.

Sentinel Safety App

Report checked and nothing identified on this.

“ Work on some projects is now being programmed for nine hours instead of 12...

Actions taken

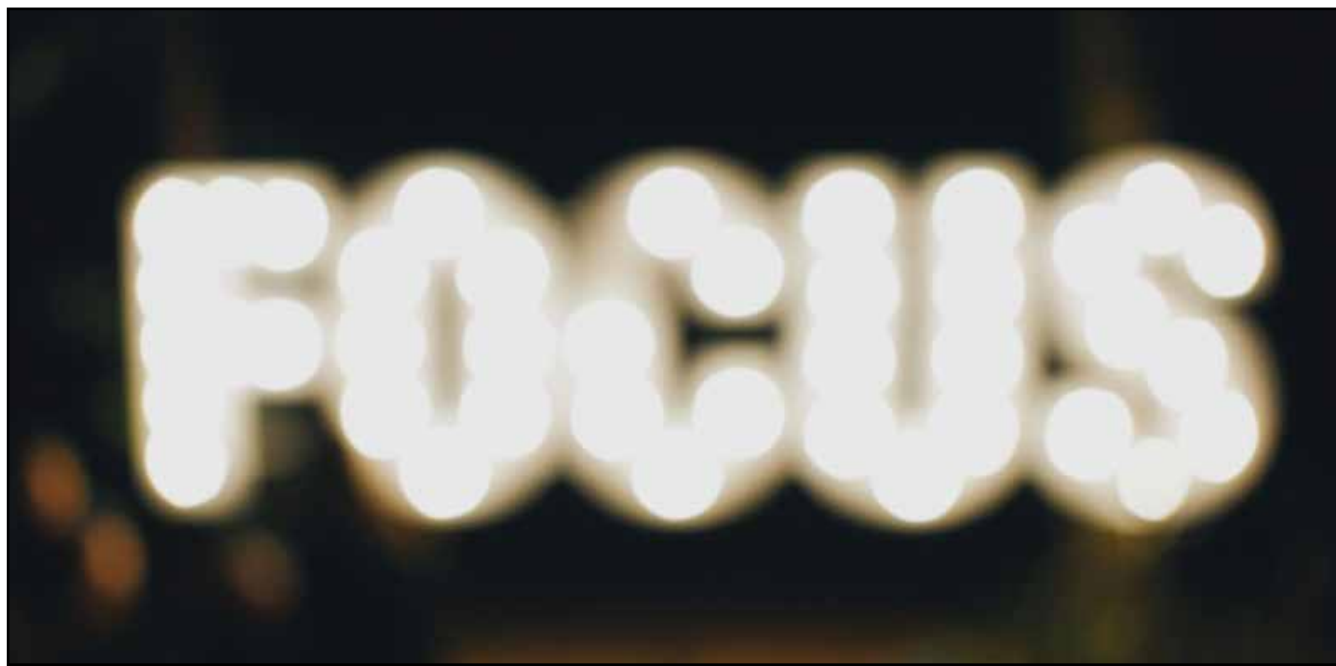
It is a great reminder to engage with both office and site staff to remind them of key points with regards to fatigue and working hours.

One of the focus areas with this is ensuring everyone is aware that they need to take ownership of their rest periods and to ensure that this time between shifts is used for rest and to ensure a work life balance is maintained.

Work on some projects is now being programmed for nine hours instead of 12 to ensure the 14 hours door-to-door policy is achieved in addition to the block booking of hotels.

How to beat distraction and stay focused for safety critical work

Our smartphones are often part of the problem, but there's plenty we can do to train our minds to concentrate better



If you're doing anything safety critical at work, or driving a car or van, you'll need to stay focused to stay safe.

But beating distraction has become harder with all the technology around us.

“...you'll need to stay focused to stay safe.

We take a look at some of the technological factors that interfere with our ability to concentrate, and what you can do to improve it.

With the vast majority of people using smartphones these days, there's a danger our brains may get hijacked.

And that applies even when our phones are off and out of sight!

“...71 per cent of us never switch our phones off.

We're all becoming more distracted these days.

In fact, being distracted has become the new norm.

We check our phones every 12 minutes on average in the UK.

And 71 per cent of us never switch our phones off.

Not only do they wake us up, but they're likely to be just inches away from our pillows when we fall asleep.

As a result, we can find ourselves never really switching off completely.

Excessive social media use can amplify the issue, potentially having a long-term impact on our mental health.

“Smartphone technology has been engineered to extract as much of your attention as possible...

Our brains have become increasingly susceptible to the digital clamour of smartphone alerts and notifications, all vying for our attention.

Alerts and notifications tend to be switched on by default.

Smartphone technology has been engineered to extract as much of your attention as possible – and it won't give up without a fight.

In the time it takes you to read this article, you may well have experienced

that 'need' to check your phone several times.

It is this heightened state of 'readiness to respond' that takes its toll on our ability to concentrate.

Your brain is being hijacked - it starts to become distracted by the expectation of being distracted!

In fact, one former industry consultant has coined the phrase 'Continuous Partial Attention'.

We might persuade ourselves we're adopting an always-on, anywhere, anytime mindset.

In reality, however, our minds are split between many different activities competing for our attention.

“Your brain is being hijacked - it starts to become distracted by the expectation of being distracted!

The myth of multitasking, often worn as a badge of pride, does a good job of convincing us that we're working more effectively.

To use an analogy, your brain is a bit like a PC.

You may have lots of applications running in the background, but each one is using up a chunk of the overall computing power.

At some point, if you demand too much of your computer, it is liable to freeze up.

It is the same with your brain.

“Doing nothing has become a bit of a lost art.

What can you do to concentrate better?

There are lots of things you can do to improve your attention span.

Break free from your smartphone

It's indispensable but also designed to hijack your brain.

You don't need to wean yourself off it entirely, though some digital detoxing may be required depending on your level of addiction!

Try leaving it beyond arm's reach for lunch, keeping it out of the bedroom altogether (that probably means buying an alarm clock), or having a break for six hours at a time once a week.

“Every time your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breathing again...

Sit for five minutes

Doing nothing has become a bit of a lost art.

But doing it well can actually improve your concentration.

If you can kill the urge to do something out of restlessness, you're on the right path.

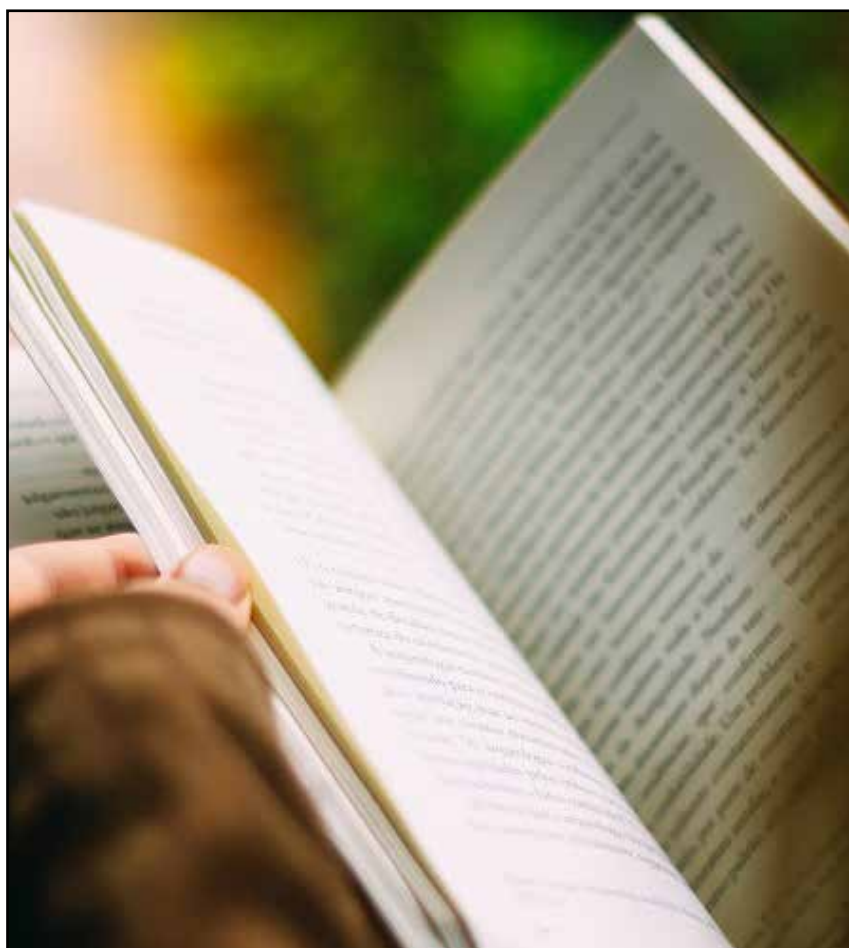
Ease yourself into a supportive, comfortable position, and just bring your attention to your breathing.

Every time your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breathing again, just as you would if you were meditating.

Extend your focus

By implementing a simple rule to focus for longer, you can boost your concentration.

Simply say to yourself 'I will do five more'



whenever you feel like quitting an activity.

If you're out jogging, do five more minutes when you feel like you can't go on anymore.

In the gym, do five more repetitions.

Or read five more pages of your book or magazine before you switch your attention to something else.

This helps you push beyond the normal limit of your concentration.

“...our minds are split between many different activities...

Read for pleasure

Our reading habits have changed over the years.

If you read online, you're much more likely to be interrupted by an alert or advert of some sort.

It's no wonder that we end up not really paying our full attention to anything.

Instead, we either have our concentration continuously broken,

or find ourselves perpetually scanning for something new.

Try picking up a book or magazine you want to read.

Exclude every other kind of distraction you are likely to encounter.

Do your best to stay with the thread or story and enjoy the experience!

“Exclude every other kind of distraction you are likely to encounter.

Count or spell backwards

It sounds much simpler than it is.

For example, start at 100 and count down from there in 5's – 95, 90, 85, 80, 75 and so on.

Hold your concentration until you reach zero, bringing your mind back to the task if it wanders.

You can increase the difficulty level by counting back in say 7's, 8's or 9's.

If you're feeling more confident, pick a higher starting number.

Spelling backwards is just a variation on this theme.

Start with a few simple words of objects around you: tree, cup, car, etc.

When you've mastered these, you can pick longer, more challenging words.

Watch a clock face

Gather your attention as you wait for the second hand of a clock to reach 12 at the top.

Then follow the movement of the hand clockwise for 60 seconds, re-focusing every time you notice your mind begins to wander away from the task.

This is more difficult than it sounds, but is a great technique if you want to achieve a calm state of mind.

“ We often walk past objects, even those we love... without paying any attention.

Listen closely to a music track

Choose a three to five minute long track you know well.

Instead of merely hearing the track, listen in more attentively to the voices, lyrics, notes, and instruments.

See if your ear can pick up features that you haven't heard before – there are normally quite a few.

Then on repeat listens, try focusing on a certain feature for the whole track.

This builds appreciation for the complexity of the musical layers.



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Pay attention to a forgotten object

We often walk past objects, even those we love, such as a family photo or painting, without paying any attention.

After a while, they tend to blend in with their surroundings.

In taking them for granted, we may miss their important meaning in our lives.

This very same principle can be applied in safety critical environments, where focusing on detail can help

us anticipate hazards and prevent injuries.

If you consistently seek to build your concentration skills using these activities, you will find yourself being better able to resist distractions.

You will be able to get your work done more effectively because your mind has been trained to pay attention.

Not only that, but you are also helping both you and your colleagues to get things done as safely as possible.

Some recent CIRAS reports on distraction

Train drivers
dazzled by
lights at
signals

Train drivers
having to make
announcements
manually

Glare
from train
headlights
affecting
drivers

Operation
of public
announcement
system

In-cab train
monitors

Working
under
pressure at
a bus
garage

Placement
of warnings
for speed
restrictions

Uncomfortable
seats on buses

Do you have any concerns about health, safety or wellbeing?

Have you tried internal reporting channels, or don't feel that you can?

Provide your contact details in the space below. Any information you provide will be treated as confidential.

We ask you to provide your name and contact details so we can get in touch to discuss your concerns. Once your report is processed, your report form will be destroyed.

Name:

Job title:

Employer:

Phone:

Mobile:

Describe your concern:

Convenient time to call:

What happens next?

- We will contact you to discuss your health and safety concerns
- A report will be written on your behalf
- We remove any information that might identify you
- We send the report to the company for a response
- Once we receive the response we will then provide you with a copy

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Fold along the dotted line and seal edges



Prevent incidents in confidence

Report hotline:
0800 4 101 101

Report textline:
07507 285 887

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