

Frontline *Matters*

ISSUE 3 - Aug/ Sept 2018



Running on empty?

How you can save yourself from exhaustion

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CIRAS reports

How reports have led to decisive action

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Speaking up for health and safety

Editor's note

Welcome to the third edition of Frontline Matters.

Fatigue is often the subject of confidential reports to CIRAS. In this edition, we have several items that focus on the issue from different angles.

There obviously isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, but it can be managed effectively if both employer and employee play their part.

One of our reports shows how a contractor has proactively responded, and it is good to see how they are engaging their staff on the topic.

We also have two related feature articles on the subject. One of the messages is that we all need to watch for the symptoms so we don't get exhausted – there is a body of evidence emerging which highlights the link between sleep and mental health.

Clearly, if we want to perform a job safely, and to the best of our ability, we need to get enough rest.

One of the feature articles explains how we can avoid being sucked too far into the 'exhaustion funnel'.

And nutrition is likely to be part of the solution, as RSSB's Health and Wellbeing Specialist, Niamh McMahon points out in her guest article.

CIRAS has helped on other issues too and it is pleasing to see the difference a single report can make.

A train operator comments in their response:

"In our opinion, a fresh voice from the frontline can influence people to reflect and review current arrangements for safety and consider better ways to do things."

I definitely couldn't have said it better myself!



Finally, may I also suggest you read Richard Booth's article on the lessons we can learn from the Sandilands tram accident?

It highlights why CIRAS has a vital role to play in surfacing safety issues if all else has failed.

Keep reporting all your health, wellbeing and safety issues!

For all comments and feedback, please email editor@ciras.org.uk.

Word from the frontline

A selection of comments from people who have made reports to CIRAS

"I've used CIRAS in the past and so I knew coming back to raise a concern would be an easy way to have my concern heard."

"From what I have seen (which is of course just a small part of what goes on at multiple locations) the safety concerns I raised have been largely resolved and the training and quality of staffing has greatly improved."

"Thank you for your help on this one. You have been a star."

"I am happy with the way CIRAS have dealt with this but overall disappointed with my company's attitude."

"I heard through word of mouth that CIRAS would be able to help me."

"Really happy with CIRAS I will give them a phone call in future if I have any safety issues."

Communications improve at Canton Depot

Reporter's observations help drive more robust briefing process



© Arriva Trains Wales. Canton Depot.

Concern

A reporter raised a safety concern about the potential for signals passed at danger (SPADs) at Canton Diesel Depot, Cardiff, during engineering works.

According to the reporter, the issue started at the beginning of 2017.

“...use of NP and LGF routes at the same time, along with shunt moves, could create SPAD and collision risks.”

At Canton Diesel Depot, there were a few entry/exit points that were often under possessions during engineering works, forcing shunters and drivers to use alternative routes.

Trains were being increasingly booked in to arrive and depart via secondary routes Ninian Park (NP) and Leck with Ground Frame (LGF).

The potential for conflicting moves was highlighted, as trains arriving via NP and LGF were being controlled by different signallers.

The process was assisted via radio contact. However, the radio channel used was not always available given that up to 10 people could be using the same channel.

NP moves were communicated to Network Rail's signallers via mobile phone to put shunt signals to danger (CF7317 & CF7318), while LGF moves were permitted via possession of an Annett's key and ground frame operation.

The reporter said that use of NP and LGF routes at the same time, along with shunt moves, could create SPAD and collision risks.

The reporter would like Arriva Trains Wales to revert to the previous procedure using either NP or LGF, but not both at the same time.

Arriva Trains Wales's response

In response to the reporter's concerns, the depot team have introduced a more robust briefing process so that impending engineering works and any associated altered shunting arrangements are communicated to frontline colleagues on a regular basis.

“...a fresh voice from the frontline can influence people to reflect and review current arrangements for safety...”

This allows colleagues time to raise any particular concerns or indicate any need for further information they may have.

The briefing takes the form of a regular engineering notice.

We have considered the reporter's concerns on the potential for conflicting train movements to take place.

Having reviewed the controls currently in place, we have concluded that they are sufficiently robust to avoid this happening.

It is important to note that movements require the permission of the controlling signaller to commence.

Any movement through the ground frame and this permission must be sought before the Annett's key is utilised.

The Annett's key is only used by trained and assessed, competent shunters at the depot.

We have noted the reporter's comments about the use of radios and the potential difficulties that they have highlighted and will therefore be convening a review meeting to look for improvement opportunities in radio use.

Additionally, on the back of the reporter's comments, we have identified that the way the quality of radio and shunter/signaller communications are monitored and recorded can also be more robustly undertaken.

Our Depot Operations Manager will therefore be developing and implementing an improved unobtrusive monitoring (and feedback) process for radio/phone shunter communications.

Once again, we'd like to thank the reporter for their observation - in our opinion, a fresh voice from the frontline can influence people to reflect and review current arrangements for safety and consider better ways to do things.

Cab seat audit leads to review of process for reporting defects

Management team at London Sovereign address concern raised by two reporters

Concern

Two reporters raised concern about the Dennis Enviro 200 bus drivers' seat causing back pain.

According to the reporters, several of these single decker buses had defective drivers' seats, causing drivers back problems and sciatica.

The problem arose after the buses were sent for refurbishment and then came back with the wrong or malfunctioning seat.

The reporters advised that these seats were supposed to be the Chapman back rest seat type – however, they were apparently reassembled with different parts from different makers and therefore could not be adjusted the way they should be.

The reporters stated that the union ran an audit and identified the defective seats, but no action had been taken to rectify the issue.

The reporters were aware of several drivers experiencing back problems and feared that it could result in long-term damage.

The reporters suggested that pain caused by the seats could lead to distraction and road traffic accidents.

The reporters asked if London Sovereign could:

- fit new ergonomic seats onto the buses?

London Sovereign's response

London Sovereign considers the safety of our employees a priority and a continual effort is made to ensure all work equipment, including cab seats do not present a risk to their health and welfare.

We have worked closely with Unite the union for a number of years to make improvements to driver comfort,



© London Sovereign RATP. Enviro 200 ergonomic drivers' seat.

which has focused largely on cab seat functionality, suitability and ensuring regular inspection and maintenance takes place.

Union consultation did not lead to a written agreement, nor did it lead to only one particular type of cab seat being fitted, such as the 'Chapman' highlighted by the reporter.

Following receipt of this report, the management team at London Sovereign met to address the individual issues raised by the reporters and conducted a full investigation.

This process involved reviewing driver sickness and absence records, which found that there have been no reported absences relating to back pain or sciatica linked to cab seats.

In addition, a comprehensive audit of all cab seats across the fleet was conducted.

One defective cab seat at Harrow garage was identified – this was

refitted with a new ergonomic cab seat earlier this year.

The Engineering Managers confirmed that all other cab seats were found to be ergonomic, fully functioning and free from defects.

The suitability and quality of internal processes were also reviewed to ensure defects are identified and closed out without unnecessary delays.

As a garage that operates a number of different routes, it often means that drivers will be required to drive different buses that have different cab seats. Even though each bus seat is ergonomically compliant, it is often found that some drivers will have a preference to a certain type of bus seat.

London Sovereign are committed to ensuring all cab seats are ergonomic but cannot commit to refitting the fleet with Chapman type cab seats as requested by the reporter, as this is not reasonably practicable.

Fatigue management enhanced after concerns highlighted

Briefings, online room bookings and recruitment drive implemented

Concern

A reporter raised a safety concern about staff exceeding the 14 hour door-to-door policy.

According to the reporter, employees were being instructed to travel from Doncaster to sites, which can be up to a three or four-hour drive away. This meant that staff were commuting for a total of six to eight hours and working an 8 to 12-hour shift.

“...staff were commuting for a total of six to eight hours and working an 8 to 12 hour shift...”

There was said to be no driver policy in place or allocated drivers for these journeys, and hotels were not always provided, leading to an increased fatigue level.

The reporter felt that driving on a long journey after a shift was unsafe, commenting that a fatal road accident could occur.

The reporter asked if First Structure could:

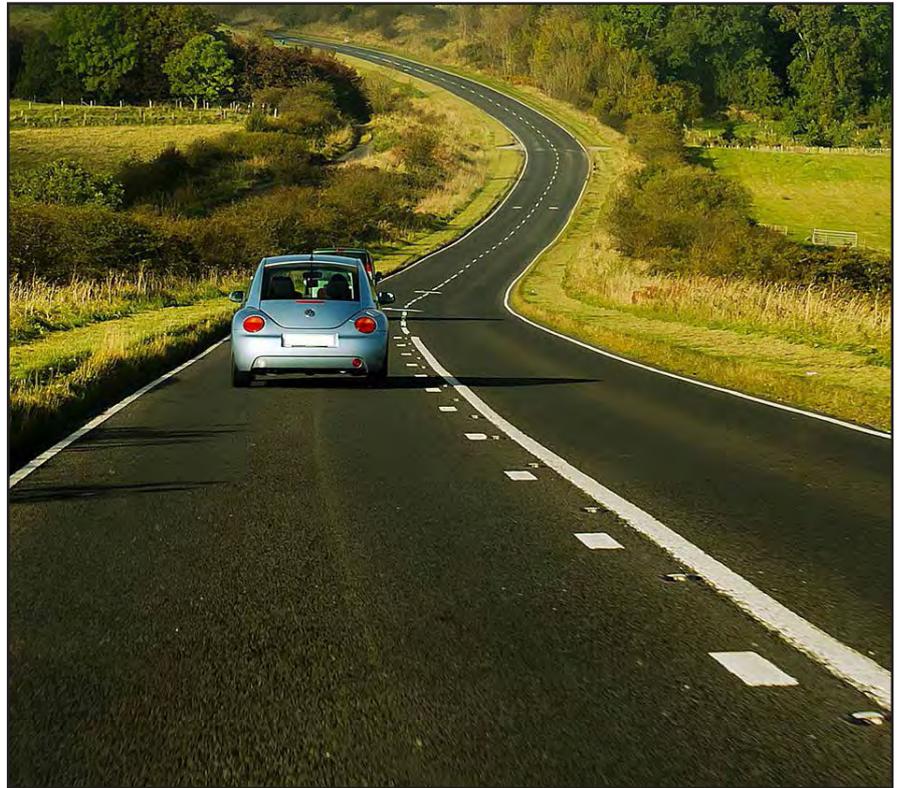
- Conduct a risk assessment accounting for commuting time?
- Provide hotels for employees travelling long distances?
- Provide an allocated driver for the journeys there and back?

First Structure's response

In response to this report, First Structure took a snapshot of working hours and the related travel time over a specific time period.

A number of contractors were working in and around London during this period and we decided to concentrate on those based in Doncaster.

Contractors who worked longer shifts during this period were supplied



with pre-booked quality local accommodation with a meal allowance included.

A number of contractors were invited to First Structure headquarters to discuss concerns they may have had about driver fatigue.

Those who attended these meetings had a positive attitude - they all agreed that they understood both their responsibility as nominated drivers and First Structure's responsibility as their primary sponsor with regards to managing driver fatigue.

“A number of contractors were invited to First Structure HQ to discuss concerns they may have had about driver fatigue.”

Improvements made:

- First Structure Ltd have signed up with Roomex, a one-stop shop

who now deal with all our hotel booking needs.

- All rooms are booked instantly online and there is no waiting around for client purchase orders or credit card authorisation.
- Safety tours will now include twice yearly fatigue briefings to all staff members.
- We are focusing on recruitment within the West Midlands and Greater London area to minimise travel time and ultimately eliminate fatigue.

KEY POINTS

- CIRAS frequently receives reports from site workers on the subject of fatigue.
- You can make a difference by reporting anything you feel affects your health or safety. If reporting doesn't work internally, consider using CIRAS.

Faulty screen replaced at Stratford to address visibility issue

Safer dispatch after investigation gets to root cause

Concern

A reporter raised a concern about a malfunctioning camera at Stratford railway station.

According to the reporter, camera 5 on platform 10A was faulty and it was affecting the driver's visibility of coaches 9, 10 and 11 when driving a 12-carriage train in the down direction.

Platform 10A is on a curve and there was not a clear view of this section of the train from the front.

“ ...it was only a matter of time before an accident occurred.

The reporter stated that this was particularly unsafe for Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains and when no dispatchers are present.

The reporter explained that the driver had to leave the cab, walk to the end of the train, manually close the doors of the three coaches and walk back to the front.

During this time, passengers were still able to board or alight the train, reopening the doors and potentially putting themselves at risk of an accident.

The reporter stated that coaches 9, 10, and 11 are the closest to the entrance of the platform, which makes them the busiest coaches and increased the likelihood of a passenger trying to board at the last minute.

The reporter also stated that the issue had been reported several times since July 2017, but no action had been taken and feared that it was only a matter of time before an accident occurred.

The reporter asked Network Rail if they could:

- Repair/ replace camera 5 on platform 10A?
- Provide dispatchers as a temporary measure?



© Network Rail. Faulty screens fixed by a specialist supplier.

Network Rail's response

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for bringing this to our attention.

Upon investigation, we found the issue not to be a faulty camera but a faulty screen.

“ The screens were fixed and commissioned successfully earlier this year.

This screen is one of a number of screens at Stratford which were installed prior to the London 2012 Olympics, and were not installed in compliance to the current standards required and were not handed over to the maintainer at the time of commissioning.

Since this issue was first reported, the maintainer has taken over the maintenance responsibility and the equipment requires a significant upgrade in order to comply with standards and be maintainable.

We are working with the train operator to ensure that safe working arrangements are in place whilst the system repairs/ improvements take place.

The current system, although not installed to the correct standards, is considered to be safe when working in the current degraded mode, provided train dispatch is carried out according to the rules.

Actions taken:

- The screens were fixed and commissioned successfully earlier this year. In this case, we repaired the existing monitors using a specialist supplier. This got us to a position where safe normal dispatch could take place.
- The new screens have now been delivered but will not be installed until later this year because the temporary fix has been so successful.
- Working with train operator to ensure safe dispatch of trains.

Dispatch safer at Stockport Station after review

New recruits to boost staffing levels and address workload



© Richard Allen, Network Rail.

Concern

A reporter raised a safety concern regarding the staffing levels of dispatch staff at Stockport Railway Station.

According to the reporter, there were fewer dispatch staff than platforms, which could potentially lead to incidents - such as a passenger falling on to the track - going unnoticed by staff.

The reporter witnessed close calls on the platforms and believed that they may have been caused by the absence of dispatch staff.

“ ...fewer dispatch staff than platforms, which could potentially lead to incidents...

The reporter asks if Virgin Trains West Coast could:

- Carry out a risk assessment reviewing the staffing levels at the station?
- Consider employing additional dispatch staff at Stockport railway station?

Virgin Trains West Coast's response

Platform train interface risk assessments are taking place to reflect changes to stopping patterns in the new timetable and as part of a periodic review.

“ This report prompted a review of staffing levels which was also prompted by the introduction of a new timetable.

Due to the workload, authority has been given for extra dispatch staff and these are being recruited.

An investigation carried out by the station manager and route safety manager highlighted the need for extra staff in the new timetable.

This report prompted a review of staffing levels which was also prompted by the introduction of a new timetable.

In the short-term, staffing is deemed adequate for the existing timetable, though extra staff will be used on

overtime to cover any shortfalls in the new timetable until new recruits are ready.

“ ... staffing of new timetables should take place earlier than planned

Recruitment is dependent on when new people are able to start their training with us.

The lesson learned is that planning for staffing of new timetables should take place earlier than planned.

Key points

- If you are concerned that staffing levels may have an impact on operational safety, report it.
- In this case, close calls had been reported earlier, but the CIRAS report gave things a little 'nudge'.

Nutrition is critical for health, wellbeing and performance

Practical tips for getting the most out of the food you eat



Niamh McMahon, health and wellbeing specialist at RSSB, shares her knowledge of nutrition.

She explains how we can balance our diets in our fast-paced, hectic lives. We will need to do battle with over-processed foods in the supermarkets, and remember that ultimately, we are the ones who are in control of what we decide to consume.

If we get it right, we will help improve our performance at work too.

The British Nutrition Foundation promotes healthy eating and drinking habits as well as encouraging people to make meals from scratch at home, instead of getting takeaways or eating highly processed foods which can be damaging to health.

“...we are the ones who are in control of what we decide to consume.

Nutrition from the food we eat provides our bodies with the protein, essential fats, minerals, vitamins and energy it needs to grow, function and live well.

As indicated on the Food4Health plate (see opposite page), a high intake of colourful fruit and vegetables every day is important.

The more variety the better, as each type has different nutrients.

Go for whole grains such as brown rice and quinoa, good fats like avocado, oily fish, olive oil, and protein rich food, such as free-range chicken.

Fish, beans or pulses are also essential, while fresh herbs and spices can provide concentrated nutrients and add fantastic bursts of flavour to our meals.

In our modern society we are bombarded daily with advertising for processed products.

Supermarkets are lined with heavily processed foods that are quite often high in sugar, salt, bad fats and artificial flavours.

While moderate amounts of these foods are ok, they are often missing the key nutrients we need to fuel our bodies and feel our best.

“ The power lies in taking control of what goes into your body - remember it's the only one you have so be sure to look after it!

Other factors affect how we eat too, including work and home pressures, the stresses of our modern fast paced lifestyles, general time restraints, lack of education around nutrition, poor food quality and an over-reliance on convenient pre-packaged food.

While this often does not have an immediate impact, over time, this along with other lifestyle factors such as lack of activity and sleep deprivation can have a negative impact on our physical health, wellbeing and performance at work.

Nutrition is a huge topic and there is often conflicting advice from various sources - my suggestion is to keep it simple. Here are some good tips:

- Avoid restrictive diets as they often lead to feelings of deprivation, which rarely result in long term success. Also, diet foods are often highly processed and artificially flavoured.
- Except for vegetables, be portion aware.

- Become label aware – respect your bodies and be mindful of what you are fueling it with. Watch out for excess salt, sugar and artificial flavourings.
- Educate yourself on the recommended daily allowance of sugar, salt and fat. Beware of long labels on food packets because they tend to indicate a lack of nutrients.
- As much as possible, stick to fresh, whole foods, fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, healthy fats and fresh fish and pulses – eat red meat less often.
- Eat as much variety of fresh wholefoods as you can, the more colour the better!
- Aim to get three portions of fruit and five (or more) portions of vegetables per day.
- Remember balance is key, going for a not-so-healthy option every now and then is fine! Just enjoy it and get back on track at your next meal.
- Educate yourself, buy a new wholefood cook book, challenge yourself to cook from scratch more often, remember every little thing counts.
- Think health and abundance, not diet and deprivation.
- Consult a nutritionist if you require more guidance or have more specific needs.

The power lies in taking control of what goes into your body – remember it's the only one you have so be sure to look after it!

More information about nutrition can be found on the British Nutrition Foundation website (www.nutrition.org.uk) and on the Food4Health webpage (www.anhinternational.org).

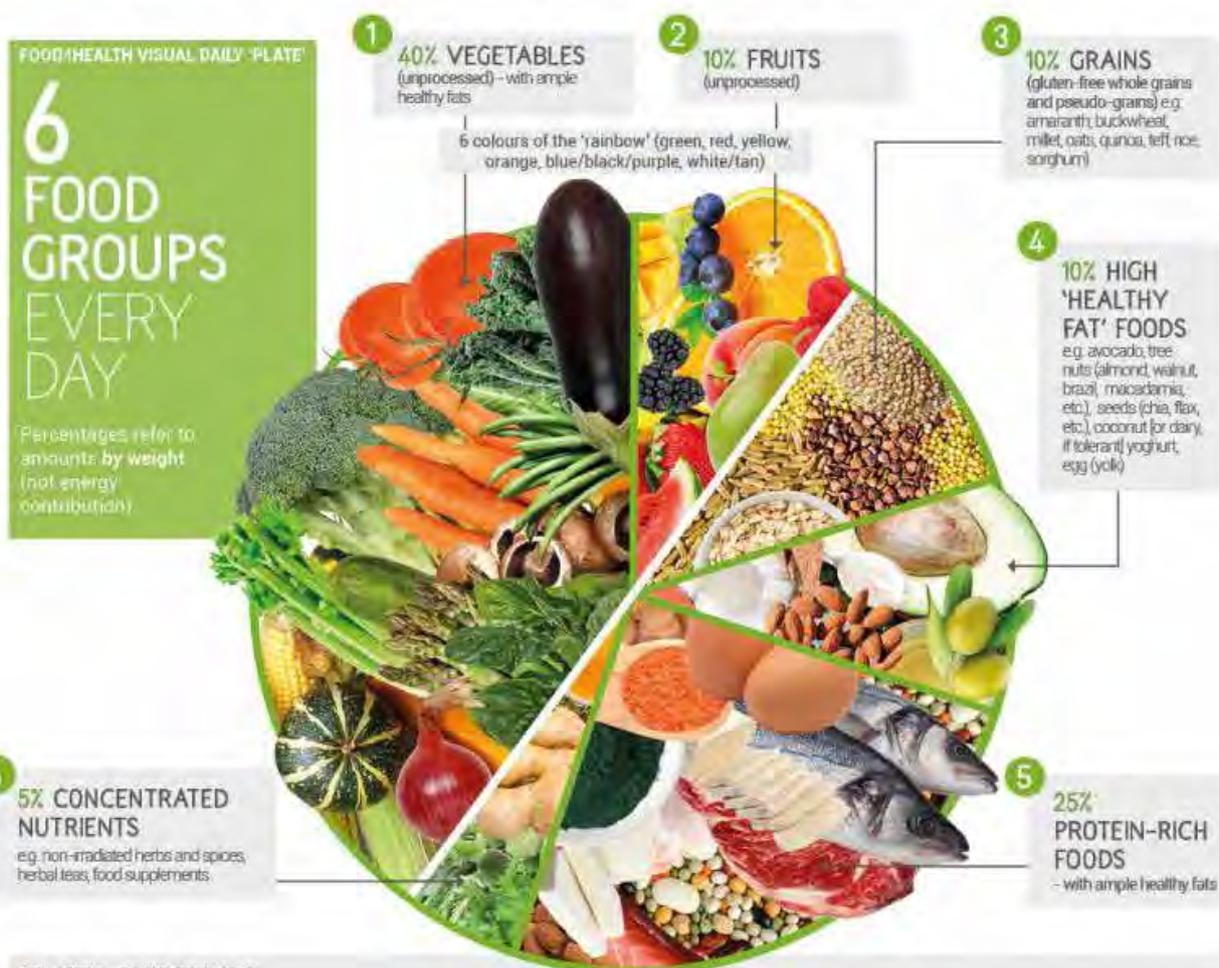
FOOD4HEALTH GUIDE

Revision 1, June 2018

FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN OVER 6

Plant-dominant, diverse, low starchy carb, anti-inflammatory, high nutrient-density – priorities for healthy eating!

Daily consumption of a diverse, varied and balanced range of fresh, largely unprocessed, whole foods with a macronutrient ratio by energy roughly of 20%, 25% and 55% for protein, complex carbohydrates and healthy fats, respectively. Intermittent fasting, that includes 5 hours or more between meals and 12 hours or more overnight, coupled with regular physical activity and ample rest, is the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.



10 KEY GUIDELINES

1. Macronutrient contribution by energy (kcal or kJ) should be approximately 20% protein (4 kcal/g), 25% carbohydrates (4 kcal/g) and 55% fats (9 kcal/g) – based on daily 'plate' illustrated above
2. Minimise consumption of highly processed foods and avoid all refined carbohydrates
3. Consume plenty of fresh, raw or lightly cooked plant foods (vegetables and fruit, in a roughly 4:1 ratio) that include all 6 colours of the 'rainbow' each day (green, red, yellow, orange, blue/black/purple, white/tan)
4. Avoid high-temperature cooking methods (frying, grilling, BBQ), unless brief. Minimise heat-damage to proteins, fats, vegetables, starches and other carbs by using slow cooking methods
5. Healthy fats for cooking include virgin coconut oil, unfiltered extra virgin olive oil, virgin avocado oil, safflower oil, and butter or ghee (the latter two only if no lactose intolerance). Other healthy fats for addition to other foods include oils of flaxseed, hempseed and macadamia
6. Consume plenty of fresh herbs and non-irradiated, preferably organic, spices, along with herbal teas (with real herbs/spices, not flavourings)
7. Avoid snacking and try to maintain 5 or more hours between meals
8. Consume at least 1.5 litres of spring or filtered water daily between meals (more if exercising intensively)
9. Avoid all foods which trigger sensitivity, intolerance or allergy
10. Seek advice from a qualified and experienced nutritional health professional on the most appropriate concentrated sources of nutrients, herbal teas and/or supplements (concentrated sources of nutrients)

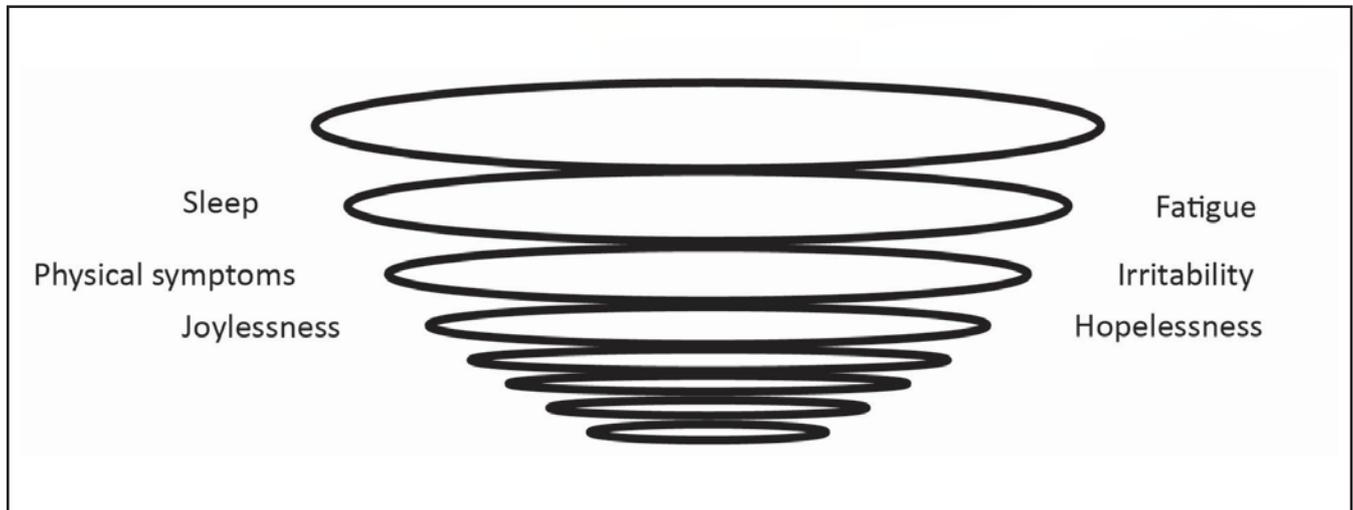
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How to avoid being sucked down the exhaustion funnel

What we can do to prevent ourselves becoming depleted



Marie Åsberg's Exhaustion Funnel.

Not getting a good nights' sleep leaves us feeling fatigued the next day.

If we suffer like this on a regular basis, we can end up driving ourselves down the exhaustion funnel as illustrated by Marie Åsberg, an expert on burnout from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

“ Self-awareness is key to noticing moods and feelings, and their impact on our thoughts and actions.

We can end up being irritable, or having unexplained physical symptoms, before sinking further into a feeling of joylessness or hopelessness.

To stop ourselves being swallowed up by the black hole of exhaustion at the bottom of the funnel, there is something we can do.

We need to take pre-emptive action by looking after ourselves more compassionately.

Self-awareness is key to noticing moods and feelings, and their impact on our thoughts and actions.

Åsberg suggests that we can nourish ourselves by choosing energising

activities we know will make a difference to our psychological wellbeing.

Simply making a list of 'nourishing activities' in one column versus 'depleting ones' in another can help here.

Then, if we feel ourselves slowly slipping down the path to exhaustion, we can engage in the more nourishing activities.

What constitutes a nourishing activity will depend on the individual concerned: it could be listening to music, reading a book, or simply chatting to a friend.

At the same time, we can seek to eliminate some of the more depleting activities.

Again, this will vary from individual to individual.

Examples could include watching TV passively for four hours on the trot, or checking your smartphone 500 times a day.

It is worth pointing out that activities like these may only be depleting if we overindulge them: everything in moderation!

You may find half an hour in front of your favourite soap the perfect tonic, but sit in front of the TV all night and it is a very different story.

“ ...delusional paranoia can be reduced by 50 per cent if sleep is stabilised using cognitive behavioural therapy.

You may well feel drained the next day at work, especially if your sleep has suffered.

Fatigue, which can set up a pathway to exhaustion, is the number one enemy of mindfulness.

Since, it is such a big topic in its own right, the next section is devoted to it.

Mental health and sleep

Many people would acknowledge the fact that too little time in the land of nod impacts on their emotions, and their ability to make sound decisions.

But if we find ourselves on the slippery road to exhaustion when we're not sleeping properly, it can cause real mental health difficulties too.

Sleep disruption has been found to precede depression.

Disturbed sleep could, in fact, provide an early warning of mental health issues.

In schizophrenics, sleep patterns can be taken to the point where they are totally smashed.

There is some good news.

Researchers at Oxford University have found that delusional paranoia can be reduced by 50 per cent if sleep is stabilised using cognitive behavioural therapy.*

*De Lange, C. (2016). Sleep well – your mind could do with it. *The New Scientist*. 28 May 2016, p39.

Clocking out

Resting involves ‘clocking out’. In this state of mind, you are no longer on task.

“Remind yourself of your key purpose in life when you wake up.

You can give up being accountable to anyone for a while.

The good news is that you may only need to nudge yourself into resting at opportune moments during the day.

Your mind frequently needs to replenish itself.

This can be done in lots of ways - for example:

- Remind yourself of your key purpose in life when you wake up
- Pause for 30 seconds after your breakfast and gather yourself before moving off again



- Notice that space in breathing between the end of an inhalation and the beginning of an exhalation
- Give yourself a few moments of peace once you finish a task, before moving to the next one
- Encourage your mind to rest by refusing to engage in ‘chatter’ about yourself or other people
- Sit in silence for a minute each day.

“Pay attention to the early signs of exhaustion, such as irritability, headaches and other physical symptoms.

There is a clear difference between rest and sleep.

In the land of nod, where we are unconscious, we have no choice where our mind takes us.

Conscious effort is needed to rest purposefully, but this can pay dividends in re-energising ourselves for the challenges ahead.

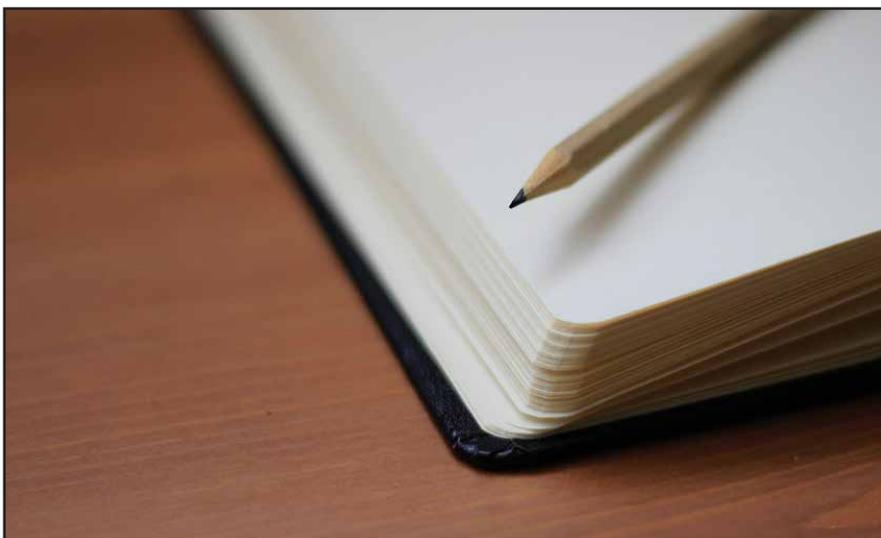
What to do to stay energised

- Ensure you get enough sleep – seven to nine hours if possible.
- Find time to rest during the day, even if it’s only a few moments to focus on something other than your work, such as your breathing.
- Pay attention to the early signs of exhaustion, such as irritability, headaches and other physical symptoms
- Make a list of all the activities you find nourishing. Do more of these!
- Make a list of all the activities you find depleting. Do less of these if you can!
- Eat healthy foods to sustain your energy levels.

Remember that you can report fatigue issues to CIRAS if you need to.

Some examples of issues reported:

- Long or double shifts
- Long travel times to site
- Lack of rest breaks or rest facilities
- Training courses sandwiched between night shifts.



Why CIRAS is so important for blame-free reporting

Reflections on the tram accident at Sandilands



© Peter Trimming / Stadler Rail Variobahn Tram in Addiscombe Road, Croydon / CC BY-SA 2.0.



Richard Booth - Independent CIRAS committee member

On this occasion TOL stated that the FRI assessment had not identified any areas of concern with the 2013 roster."

This article takes a closer look at some of the lessons we can learn from the tram accident at Sandilands – in particular, what it means for safety reporting.

Seven people died and 51 were injured on 9 November 2016 when a speeding tram overturned on a bend. It is possible that this accident could have been prevented if reports about the risk of overturning had surfaced earlier.

Where internal reporting fails to address safety risks, a confidential reporting channel like CIRAS is often able to resolve matters to the satisfaction of all parties.

We have always been consistent with our messaging here: if you feel you can't report internally, for any reason, or you've tried but the response had been unsatisfactory, you can always approach CIRAS. We're here to listen and facilitate a resolution.

Many reports to CIRAS make a tangible difference to health and safety when all else has failed.

Please note that the article below has been written by Richard Booth, an independent CIRAS committee

member, the views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of CIRAS.

TOL (Tram Operations Limited) is now a member of CIRAS, but at the time of the accident they were not.

Drivers were hesitant to report errors to their supervisors, but a CIRAS report, by just one driver, might have alerted TOL to the risks of overturning.

“ The tram overturned attempting to negotiate a very sharp curve at 45 mph compared with a speed limit of 12 mph.

In fact, the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) report (December 2017) highlighted that:

“...a Croydon tram driver contacted CIRAS on 4 March 2013 about a concern they had about fatigue arising from TOL's roster.

In response, TOL reported to CIRAS that rosters are only implemented following consultation with trade unions and the completion of an assessment of the roster using the HSE's fatigue risk index (FRI).

In summary, CIRAS had been used by a concerned member of staff previously, but not specifically to highlight the risks of overturning and there had been no active promotion of the scheme at the time of the report.

Underestimating the risks

The tram overturned attempting to negotiate a very sharp curve at 45 miles per hour (mph) compared with a speed limit of 12 mph.

It was thought the risks would be sufficiently controlled by a driver's training and experience in conjunction with speed limit signs.

“ ...three tunnels immediately before the turn perhaps acted as a disorientating 'error trap' and the driver may have lost his sense of awareness.”

The RAIB report noted:

“The only warning provided to tram drivers approaching the curve at Sandilands in darkness was a sign that was not visible until the driver had passed the point at which the tram's speed could [only] be reduced to the

required speed by application of the hazard brake.

No other mitigation, other than drivers' route knowledge, was provided against the risk of travelling around the curve at excessive speed."

Moreover, three tunnels immediately before the turn perhaps acted as a disorientating 'error trap' and the driver may have lost his sense of awareness.

Reporting without fear of retribution

FirstGroup (the parent company of TOL) had in fact, a telephone confidential hot line. The RAIB infers that no driver contacted it.

If so, there are plausible reasons: it might not be perceived as sufficiently independent, and perhaps difficult to use in confidence (as the hot line also seems to be a non-confidential facility).

Confidentiality is assured at CIRAS and their independent expert team reviews both the report and the organisation's response.

“ The RAIB report focussed on the breakdown of communications between drivers and their supervisors... ”

The original report can therefore be closed out to the satisfaction of all parties.

CIRAS exists because a 'just culture' is a vital aspiration but can 'never' be wholly relied upon.

CIRAS exists essentially for two purposes.

First, to allow reporters with concerns to raise issues that have not, in their view, received attention in their companies (about 75% of CIRAS reports).

Secondly, to encourage reporting by staff who may feel inhibited to talk to their employers, for whatever reasons.

What matters is that, as this post suggests, reporting to CIRAS may prevent bad events, and conversely that non-reporting may lead to managers living in a fools' paradise.

A further benefit of CIRAS reporting is that it obliges companies to reflect on



the concerns that have been brought to their attention.

It can only be speculation what might have been different if just one TOL driver had made a report to CIRAS.

“ Confidentiality is assured at CIRAS and their independent expert team reviews both the report and the organisation's. ”

With all the variables involved, perhaps nothing. But it is the generality that matters.

CIRAS is a 'long stop' that plays a major part in improving communications and feedback in the transport industries. It is valued by member companies.

Managers may reasonably believe that all is well, but a CIRAS report may reveal a more realistic perspective.

The RAIB report focussed on the breakdown of communications between drivers and their supervisors at an operational level.

But the deficiencies on the Croydon route were also a consequence of long standing fallible decisions, notably the apparent non-involvement of the drivers in risk assessments.

TOL's response to a 'fatigue' concern mentioned above was to emphasise trade union involvement.

“ ...drivers knew far more about the hazards on the line than their managers. ”

Why were drivers not involved in the assessments?

I would personally welcome more CIRAS reports on topics that go to the root of transport safety management, in this case participation in risk assessments.

For my conclusion is that the drivers knew far more about the hazards on the line than their managers.

KEY POINTS

- You can help prevent an accident. If you're a frontline worker, you are likely to have an in-depth understanding of the risks.
- Raise health and safety concerns internally wherever possible. If you can't, or have already tried, contact CIRAS.

Spare a thought for staff abused at work

Survey findings highlight the link between abuse and mental health

Workplace abuse can cause high levels of stress and anxiety, whilst spilling over into personal lives too.

A new RSSB report, based on a survey of 769 staff across seven train operating companies, sheds light on a subject which needs tackling.

Workplace abuse was common for train guards, and the platform, ticket office, retail, revenue protection and gateline staff surveyed.

Almost 70 per cent said that they experienced workplace abuse either daily or weekly, but there is a danger in assuming it is an accepted fact of life.

Verbal abuse in the form of yelling, shouting, rude or hostile behaviour had been experienced by 97 per cent of those who had experienced incidents.

Physical abuse, such as kicking and punching, had been experienced by around 25 per cent of respondents. Almost 8 per cent had experienced sexual assaults.

Abusive behaviour could be triggered by a person being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but also by a host of other factors.

Late trains, penalty fares, out of order ticket machines, finding oneself on the wrong train, lack of announcements, all provide the fodder for common, but inexcusable behaviour.

It is the staff themselves who must deal with the psychological effects.

Mental health is clearly affected by workplace abuse, with 55 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that they felt anxious about the possibility of encountering abuse from customers in the course of their daily work.

It was particularly difficult to 'switch off' after incidents, with respondents describing both short and long-term effects – there were difficulties sleeping and feeling fatigued, and



some staff ruminating over instances of abuse.

Because the effects of abuse may not be experienced until sometime after an incident, effective, ongoing support from employers is required.

So did staff feel they were supported?

A proportion (46 per cent) said they were satisfied with the support they had accessed at work, though 29 per cent said they weren't.

An issue that cropped up here was that 45 per cent of respondents said they did not actually know what type of employer support was provided.

“ A high proportion (68 per cent) said that a reason for not reporting abuse was that no action was taken.

Perceptions of the support provided would likely improve with greater awareness of what was on offer, a higher number of welfare checks, more face-to-face interaction, closer listening to staff concerns, and a greater recognition of the emotional impact of abuse on staff.

There is also a clear role for training to play because 66 per cent of respondents rated their workplace abuse training as just 'fair' or 'poor'.

Over a fifth had never actually had any training, and only 27 per cent said they were confident or very confident in recognising the symptoms of workplace abuse.

Another area worthy of attention is the reporting of workplace abuse.

Only 38 per cent of respondents could say that abuse was reported 'most of the time' or 'always', suggesting a level of under-reporting.

“ It was particularly difficult to 'switch off' after incidents, with respondents describing both short and long-term effects...”

A high proportion (68 per cent) said that a reason for not reporting abuse was that no action was taken.

Just over half thought that abuse was seen as part of the job, suggesting that the high frequency of exposure normalised it.

For staff to be motivated to report in the first place, they will need to receive feedback on any actions taken.

If no action is taken, the reasons should still be explained to close the feedback loop.

KEY POINTS

- You can always use CIRAS if other reporting options have been exhausted.
- You can report if you feel threatened by abuse or have any concerns about the support or training your employer offers.

Do you have any **concerns** about health and safety?

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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www.ciras.org.uk