



## Document Control

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1.0	Human Resources Manager	New	SMT



## **1.0 POLICY STATEMENT:**

Sunbeam House Services is committed to providing a healthy working environment for all employees. It is recognised that employees are more productive if they are able to strike a healthy balance between their life at work and at home.

## **2.0 PURPOSE**

The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 and the Health and Safety Authority's Regulations with regard to Night Workers set out minimum safety and health requirements for the organisation. The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to Managers and employees in relation to Night Working.

### **2.1 LEGISLATION**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (No.10 of 2005) places general duties on employers to provide a safe place of work, carry out risk assessments and prevent accidents and illness at work.

Employees also have duties under the 2005 Act including cooperating with their employer on matters of health and safety. In addition a number of specific sets of regulations have been made under the 2005 Act, including the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 299 of 2007), and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Night Work and Shift Work) Regulations 2000 (S.I. No. 11 of 2000)

## **3.0 DEFINITION OF NIGHT WORK AND NIGHT WORKER**

Under Section 16 of the Organisation of working time act 1997;

**"Night time"** means the period between midnight and 7 a.m. on the following day;

**"Night work"** means work carried out during night time;

The Act defines a Night Worker as an employee who normally works at least **3 hours** of his/her daily working time during the period between **midnight and 7am** on the following day and who's night working hours in each year is equal to or exceeds **50%** of the total number of hours worked by him/her during that year.

Special Category Night Workers are employees to whom an assessment carried out by his/her employer, in relation to the risks associated with the work that the night worker is employed to do, indicates that the work involves special hazards or a heavy physical or mental strain. This assessment must take into account specific effects and hazards of the night work.

The following provisions also apply to Night Workers:

- The normal working hours of night workers should not exceed an average of 8 hours per 24 hours over a 2 month referencing period. For special category night workers, the hours should not exceed 8 hours in each 24 hour period.
- Night time means any period of not less than 7 hours and must include in any case the period between midnight and 7am

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- Normal contracted night time shifts should not exceed the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time legislation.
- Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires an employer to undertake a risk assessment to assess whether an employee is at a significantly higher risk when working at night and to determine what measures should be put in place to eliminate or minimize such risks.

#### **4.0 SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees of Sunbeam House Services who will engage in night in the course of their work

#### **5.0 ANNUAL MEDICAL /OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT FOR NIGHT WORK**

Employees who are employed specifically to carry out night work will be required to undergo medical assessment for night work prior to taking up duty (at the company's expense).

All night workers are entitled to avail of an annual health assessment from the organisation's nominated Registered General Practitioners (at the company's expense).

Night workers suffering from health problems recognised as being connected with or made worse the fact that they perform night work will be required to undergo an Occupational Health Assessment with an Independent third party (at the company's expense).

Where the Independent Occupational Health Assessor advises that a night worker is suffering from health problems caused or made worse by night work then the employee may be transferred to work in another suitable position (if available) where they would not be considered a night worker.

Where this occurs the Reporting Manager in conjunction with the Senior Services manager and the Senior Services HR Manager will be obliged to review the employment terms and conditions of the employee. In such circumstances no compensation for loss of night premium would apply.

##### **5.1 ENCOURAGE EARLY REPORTING OF ANY PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH NIGHT WORKING**

Employees have a role to play in identifying and reporting problems. An employee is required to report any personal, shift schedule or shift environment problems as early as possible.

##### **5.2 EMPLOYEEES WHO ARE EXPECTANT ANE NEW MOTHERS**

Employees who are expectant and new mothers are able to work night shifts, unless they have a medical certificate which states otherwise from their GP or midwife. This could be obtained if there is a specific work risk identified. If this is the case then employers must offer suitable alternative day work on the same terms and conditions. If that is not possible, then the employee should be suspended from

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work on Health & safety leave for as long as is necessary to protect the health and safety of both the employee and the child.

**NOTE: Sleepover shifts are not night work shifts as defined under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.**

## **6.0 NIGHT WORK RISK ASSESSMENTS**

Managers are responsible for carrying out systematic in-depth risk assessments of all hazards in relation to night working arrangements. The purpose is to enable decisions to be made about tasks and the use of substances in the workplace and the appropriate controls, including the need for health surveillance to take place.

## **7.0 INFORMATION AND TRAINING**

Employees and others must be provided with all the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks involved with night working.

## **8.0 EFFECTS OF NIGHT WORK AND DISRUPTION OF CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS**

The Human body follows a daily rhythm, which involves the fluctuation of over 100 body functions, with regular peaks and troughs, in a 24-hour cycle. These daily cycles are called circadian rhythms.

Circadian Rhythms regulate body functions such as temperature, metabolism, digestion, blood pressure, secretion of adrenalin, sleeping and waking. These rhythmical processes form the body's internal clock and are co-coordinated so as to allow for high activity (peaks) during the day and low activity (troughs) at night. Hence why people often feel most active and alert around 4-6pm and sleepest around 4-6am.

The effect of night work on circadian rhythms may cause or contribute to a number of biological, psychosocial and individual effects.

Biological Effects include: **cardiovascular disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, circadian dysrhythmia.**

Psychosocial Effects include: **sleep loss/fatigue, lowered performance, increased accidents, stress.**

Individual Effects include: **disrupted family/social life e.g. isolation from friends, family, social events, celebrations, sports activities etc...**

## **9.0 GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES TO COPE WITH AND COUNTERACT THE EFFECTS/RISKS OF NIGHT WORKING**

### **9.1 PREPARING FOR THE NIGHT SHIFT**

Night working employees should;

- Exercise before shift starts.
- Take a nap of 1-4 hours before coming on duty to work the first night shift

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- Have the largest meal after the day-time sleep, before starting the night shift.
- Build a successful normal sleep routine

## **9.2 SURVIVING THE NIGHT SHIFT**

Night working employees should;

- Plan a workload that is appropriate to the length and timing of the shift.
- If reasonably practicable, schedule a variety of tasks to be completed during the shift to allow some choice about the order in which they are done.
- Avoid scheduling demanding, dangerous, monotonous and/or safety critical work during the night, the early morning, or towards the end of long shifts or during other periods of low alertness.
- Encourage and promote the benefits of scheduling regular breaks time
- Improve alertness by exposure to bright light during the night
- Use caffeine cautiously, if at all, as it is a stimulant.
- Have a light meal in the middle of a night shift; choose small portions.
- Avoid fatty foods entirely during shift.
- If possible, do the lightest/easiest tasks between 4-6am.

## **9.3 RECOVERING FROM THE NIGHT SHIFT**

Night working employees should;

- In planning a long drive home, consider the risks
- Develop a routine for sleeping during the day time
- Keep their sleep debt to a minimum.