

Nuts, Bolts, and Electrons

Fatigue Survival Toolbox

Would you go into the desert without water? Unless you're part camel, the obvious answer is "no" since we all know how important water is for survival. However, this same acknowledgment of a life-sustaining necessity doesn't always seem to apply to sleep with the same level of urgency. Going to work without adequate sleep is like going into the desert without water: It is dangerous!

Yet, it's startling how few of us actually get the required winks needed each night and come to work fatigued time and time again. Recognizing this, the FAA created several new tools for aviation maintenance technicians (AMT) to heighten awareness of this vital issue and to help keep the dangerous consequences of fatigue at bay.

A Few Keys to Survival

Some in the aviation industry continue to see fatigue as a normal and unavoidable part of aviation maintenance. They consider that with enough effort, tired workers can continue to perform their jobs effectively. However, the evidence shows that fatigue has a very real detrimental impact on not only your personal safety, but also flight safety. Fatigue is a known contributor to on-the-job mishaps, personal injury, poor personal health, injury to others, and the quality of your family and social life.

To be fully prepared for long work days, night work, and an unpredictable schedule, you need to be aware, plan, and take action. FAA has put together several new tools to help. Key among them is a 2010 pocket calendar for AMTs entitled Fatigue Survival Toolbox. The portable calendar identifies and features 12 critical issues that can influence fatigue and provides you with the tools necessary to combat fatigue both on and off the job.

Be Aware

The first step to surviving fatigue is recognizing that fatigue is not something you can just "work through." You must recognize that fatigue is a hazard that can lead to increased errors and greater safety risks. Most of us cannot accurately assess when we are fatigued. However, there are a number

of physical, mental, and emotional symptoms to help determine if fatigue has become a safety risk. By reviewing the list of symptoms provided in the calendar

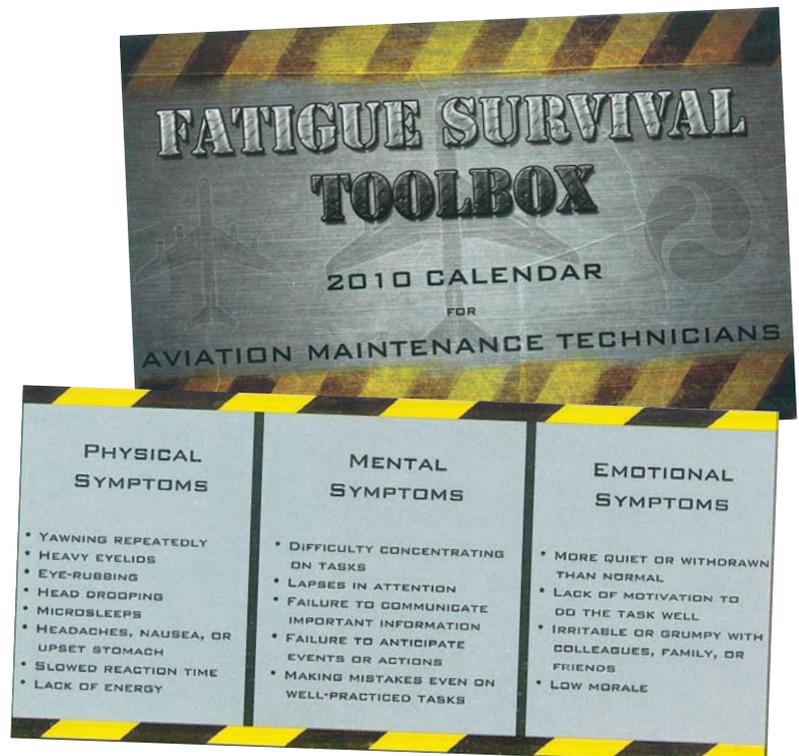
and listed below, you'll have a good idea if you may

be experiencing some level of fatigue or reduced alertness. If you exhibit fatigue-related symptoms regularly, you should consider seeing a doctor.

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Planning Is Important

Most of us would not even think of going into the desert without a plan, yet many of us only think of the next thing that has to be done in our daily lives. To have quality of life, we must plan and set aside time for sleep, work, family, and friends. We must prioritize our time and prepare in advance. For example, you probably shouldn't plan to perform a complex maintenance activity on a Friday night after you have worked a full day, run errands, mowed



PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- YAWNING REPEATEDLY
- HEAVY EYELIDS
- EYE-RUBBING
- HEAD DROOPING
- MICROSLEEPS
- HEADACHES, NAUSEA, OR UPSET STOMACH
- SLOWED REACTION TIME
- LACK OF ENERGY

MENTAL SYMPTOMS

- DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING ON TASKS
- LAPSSES IN ATTENTION
- FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE IMPORTANT INFORMATION
- FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE EVENTS OR ACTIONS
- MAKING MISTAKES EVEN ON WELL-PRACTICED TASKS

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- MORE QUIET OR WITHDRAWN THAN NORMAL
- LACK OF MOTIVATION TO DO THE TASK WELL
- IRRITABLE OR GRUMPY WITH COLLEAGUES, FAMILY, OR FRIENDS
- LOW MORALE

the lawn, and helped put the kids to bed. Although you may think you are okay to do the job, your body's internal clock will be telling your brain to go to sleep. The bottom line: We must be aware of our limitations and plan accordingly.

Take Action

Planning is effective only if it is paired with action. So, don't delay—request a copy of the Fatigue Survival Toolbox calendar now. Ask your

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local FAASTeam Program Manager (FPM) for details. You can identify your FPM by going to www.FAASafety.gov, then go to the "Directory" where you can search for the appropriate person to contact.

In addition to the calendar, there are other tools that can help guide your plan of action against fatigue. An FAA workgroup involving scientists, mechanics, and regulators recently launched a

new fatigue section of the Maintenance Human Factors Web site, along with a new fatigue-focused newsletter for AMTs. Both of these are available at www.mxfatigue.com.

Even with these fatigue identification and risk mitigation tools available, the most powerful and direct way to confront fatigue is individual responsibility. Now, get some sleep!

Katrina E. Avers, Ph.D., is a research scientist in the Human Factors Research Division at FAA's Civil Aerospace Medical Institute. Her research focuses on organizational assessment, fatigue education, fatigue reporting systems, and fatigue risk management programs for flight crew, cabin crew, and maintenance technicians.

William B. Johnson, Ph.D., is FAA Chief Scientific and Technical Advisor for Human Factors in Aircraft Maintenance Systems. He joined FAA in 2004 after 30 years of private sector experience in academia, safety engineering consulting, and airline/MRO training. He is an Aviation Maintenance Technician and a 40-year pilot.



Coming Soon: FAASTeam Safety Stand Down

**FAA Safety Team – FAASTeam –
is standing down for safety on April 17, 2010.**

Stay tuned to www.FAASafety.gov to learn more about FAASTeam Safety Stand Down and see the article on page 3.

