

Consecutive Shifts & Rest Periods Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | December 2024

Important Notice

This template provides general guidance on rest periods. Minimum rest period requirements vary by award and industry. Ensure compliance with your specific modern award and WHS obligations.

1. Purpose

This policy establishes minimum rest periods between shifts and limits on consecutive working days at [Company Name]. It ensures employee wellbeing, manages fatigue risks and maintains compliance with WHS obligations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees regardless of employment type
- All shifts including regular, overtime and on-call
- All locations and departments

3. Why Rest Periods Matter

Adequate rest between shifts is essential for:

- Employee health and wellbeing
- Workplace safety and reduced accident risk
- Maintaining quality of work
- Meeting WHS duty of care obligations
- Complying with award requirements

4. Minimum Rest Periods

4.1 Standard Rest Period

[Company Name] requires a minimum rest period of [10/11/12] hours between the end of one shift and the start of the next.

4.2 Award Requirements

Specific awards may require different breaks:

- 10-hour break (many awards)
- 11-hour break (some awards)
- 12-hour break (certain industries)

4.3 Reduced Rest Periods

Rest periods may only be reduced:

- Where the award specifically permits
- By genuine agreement with the employee
- In emergency situations

5. Consecutive Shifts Limits

5.1 Maximum Consecutive Days

- Employees should not work more than [5/6/7] consecutive days
- At least [1/2] consecutive days off should follow
- Exceptions require management approval

5.2 Night Shift Limits

- Maximum [4/5] consecutive night shifts recommended
- Additional rest period after night shift sequence

6. Clopening Shifts

"Clopening" (closing shift followed by opening shift) should be:

- Avoided where operationally possible
- Subject to minimum rest period requirements
- By agreement with the employee

7. Fatigue Management

7.1 Recognising Fatigue

Signs of fatigue include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Slower reaction times
- Reduced alertness
- Increased errors

7.2 Reporting Fatigue

- Employees must report if too fatigued to work safely

- No penalty for reporting genuine fatigue concerns
- Alternative arrangements will be made

8. Rostering for Rest

- Build rest periods into roster design
- Avoid scheduling consecutive long shifts
- Ensure adequate time off patterns
- Consider cumulative fatigue over roster cycle

9. Overtime Considerations

- Rest period requirements apply after overtime
- Consider reducing following shift if rest compromised
- Employee can decline additional shifts without penalty

10. Responsibilities

10.1 Employees

- Arrive fit for work and adequately rested
- Report fatigue concerns to manager
- Use rest periods for actual rest

10.2 Managers

- Design rosters that allow adequate rest
- Monitor for signs of employee fatigue
- Address fatigue concerns promptly

11. Exceptions

Reduced rest periods may be permitted in genuine emergencies with employee agreement and compensatory rest arranged.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following fatigue-related incidents.

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Consecutive Shifts & Rest Periods Policy.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____