



Spotlight on...  
worker fatigue

CONSIDERATE  
CONSTRUCTORS  
SCHEME

## Case Study: Northern Gas Networks

### Safeguarding and supporting colleagues

Since it started operating in 2005, Northern Gas Networks has been leading the way as one of the most cost-efficient of the UK's eight gas distribution networks. It delivers great value for money to customers, as well as a whole host of social and economic benefits to its region. The company is recognised as a dynamic, passionate, conscious and people-focused team that safely and reliably delivers gas to over 2.7 million homes and businesses across the North East, northern Cumbria and much of Yorkshire.

Northern Gas Networks is a 24/7 gas distribution business: it does not source the gas, but works with those that do to deliver it through a vast network of underground pipes that are constantly being invested in and upgraded, ensuring a reliable supply of gas to communities for years to come. It is also responsible for approximately 190 emergency and repair teams who respond to public reported gas escapes. These reports can range from no escape found, to rare major incidents involving all the emergency services.

At times, working for Northern Gas Networks can be both physically and mentally demanding. However, keeping colleagues and customers safe and sound is a priority, and Northern Gas Networks has a number of initiatives in place to support colleagues at times of high demand on its skills and services.

#### WORKING TIME REGULATIONS POLICY

Protecting and supporting colleagues is vitally important and while we operate in an environment where, due to the nature of our activities, it is sometimes necessary for colleagues to work extended hours, this is carefully managed to ensure colleagues' wellbeing.

NGN closely monitors colleagues' working patterns and provides guidance and support where required. NGN's culture encourages colleagues to talk to their manager if they are concerned about their workload and the company has introduced a number of measures to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken in good time to provide support as required.

#### WORKING TIME AGREEMENT

As part of our compliance with the Working Time Regulations, NGN has developed a Working Time Agreement to protect colleagues from extended periods of working:

- **No employee will work more than 60 hours in any one week and more than 12 hours in any one day.**
- **All workers must have a daily rest period of 11 hours per day and a weekly rest period of one day off per week and two days off per fortnight.**
- **No employee will work more than an average 48 hours a week calculated over a 17-week reference period.**
- **All workers must have a rest break of 20 minutes where the working day exceeds six hours and all workers must take a 30-minute meal break during the working day.**
- **All workers must have a risk assessment discussion with their manager.**
- **All workers must have 25 days paid leave. This amount of leave is more than the Working Time Regulations require employers to provide, and night workers will receive free health assessments.**

## WORKING TIME RISK ASSESSMENT

Northern Gas Networks has developed a Working Time Risk Assessment form to ensure that colleagues are able to work safely.

The risk assessment asks a series of questions relating to the following: hours worked; rest breaks taken; occupational driving; physical and mental wellbeing; the working environment and the workload being undertaken. If at the end of the risk assessment the employee does not believe they are able to continue working safely, alternative arrangements are made to ensure that the worker is protected.

## OCCUPATIONAL DRIVING

Northern Gas Networks recognises that excessive amounts of driving can lead to stress and fatigue. In response, it has developed a policy on occupational driving which applies to any employee driving a company vehicle or driving their own vehicle on business.

The policy includes guidance and support for colleagues to ensure that they are safe on the road. It ensures that colleagues:

- **Are well rested and feeling fit and healthy before driving a long distance.**
- **Take care not to drive long journeys after having worked prolonged hours.**
- **Carry out a risk assessment based on hours slept, how they feel both mentally and physically and driving conditions.**
- **Plan regular rest breaks in their journeys. On long journeys, it is recommended that a 15-minute break, preferably away from the vehicle, is taken every two hours.**
- **Stop in a safe place and rest if they are feeling drowsy.**
- **Plan a route and allow sufficient time to reach the destination and avoid driving journeys lasting longer than one hour between midnight and 6am as natural alertness is at a minimum during this time.**

## LONE WORKING

At Northern Gas Networks, there are a number of roles that involve significant lone working that requires risk assessments and control measures to protect the health, safety and welfare of colleagues.

Colleagues are required to take care of their physical and mental health, and consider the potential risks associated with lone working. They are asked to follow any specific

procedures laid down and to speak to their manager as soon as possible about any issues that they have with lone working.

In addition, colleagues are always encouraged to carry out a self-assessment of their physical and mental wellbeing; fatigue and working hours; repetitive movement or static posture; the working environment and the work being undertaken: all of which are factors which can exacerbate feelings of fatigue. They can then speak to their manager about how they feel, and then access the support and guidance that they need to address any of these particular issues.