
Emergency Medicine: Risk of Injury Increases with Longer Shifts



Long work shifts are known to increase fatigue and impact on decision making. Now a study published in *Occupational & Environmental Medicine* has shown a 60% increase in injury and illness risk among emergency services (EMS) clinicians when shifts are 16-24 hours long.

In this observational study the researchers analysed three years of shift schedules — almost 1 million shifts of more than 4000 employees. They also looked at occupational health records for 14 emergency medical services agencies in the United States.

Their analysis showed that risks of an occupational injury or illness increased as shifts lengthened. Shifts longer than 12 hours were associated with a 50% increased risk of sustaining an injury compared with shifts under 12 hours, after taking into account factors such as employer type, night or day shift, employment status, and how often the EMS crew had previously worked together.

The risk associated with shifts lasting 16-24 hours was more than double that of shifts up to 8 hours.

The authors, led by Matthew Weaver, Brigham and Women's Hospital, recommend trials of novel, minimally intrusive, intrashift and intershift safety management interventions in the EMS setting.

Source: [BMJ](#)

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Published on : Tue, 15 Sep 2015