



Returning to work 2024 – post holiday safety risks

The Transpower Health, Safety and Wellbeing team hope that you return to work after a safe, enjoyable, and replenishing break. Did you know there's a notable rise in accidents immediately after employees return from the holiday break? The reasons for this are various, a few are outlined below:

- Our minds may be on the wonderful holiday we had, not on the task at hand
- Not all of our coworkers may back at work at the same time. This may leave us short-handed and put pressure on those who are back at work
- If the work we do during the year is quite physical or require concentration, we may find that we have lost a little strength or focus over the time we are on holiday and unable to safely perform the work
- We may find that we are a little out of practice in the work we do, not always remembering the steps we take to stay safe
- Trying to work at the same rate we did before our holiday – we overextend our abilities

This could apply to a person taking time off at other times of the year and their risk may be elevated for a period when they return, but often, other colleagues compensate for this, and the collective risk is managed. When all (or most) employees experience this in the same period, as experienced in the holiday season, the risks increase for all. All these factors contribute in same way to an increase in safety risk.

Use the following 3 rules:

1. **Is it safe to start?** – check the list below
2. **Is it safe to continue?** – particularly if change occurs
3. **Is it safe to leave?** – for others who may be affected after the job is finished

A few tools to help you safely return to work are below:

- **Regroup** - Have a regrouping toolbox/safety meeting to reset safety in your work area. Acknowledge the risk to the group and how they can individually and/or collectively stay safe
- **Be Fit** - Make sure you are both mentally and physically fit for work – this includes free from impairment, fatigue or other factors affecting your ability
- **Ease in** - For the first few days don't overextend yourself. Try to ease back into the swing of things
- **Pay attention** - Pay particular attention to safety work plans. Check and double check
- **Look after others** - Keep an eye on your coworkers. Are they struggling and need a break?
- **Be aware** of 'soft-signals' that safety might be an escalating issue – a spate of minor injuries or incidents
- **Prepare to Pause** - If things don't seem right or you feel your team is entering a zone of heightened safety risk, pause and reset safety

Let's all have a safe return to work and a great start to the year!

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