



DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

TOOLBOX TALK: Daylight Savings Time – Hidden Hazards & Safety Tips

RATTLIR Safety Series – “Strike Before It Bites”

Purpose

The transition into or out of Daylight Savings Time (DST) disrupts our normal sleep cycles, reduces alertness, and increases the risk of incidents at work and on the road. This toolbox talk highlights the hidden hazards around DST and outlines simple steps to stay alert, safe, and effective during the first few days after the time change.

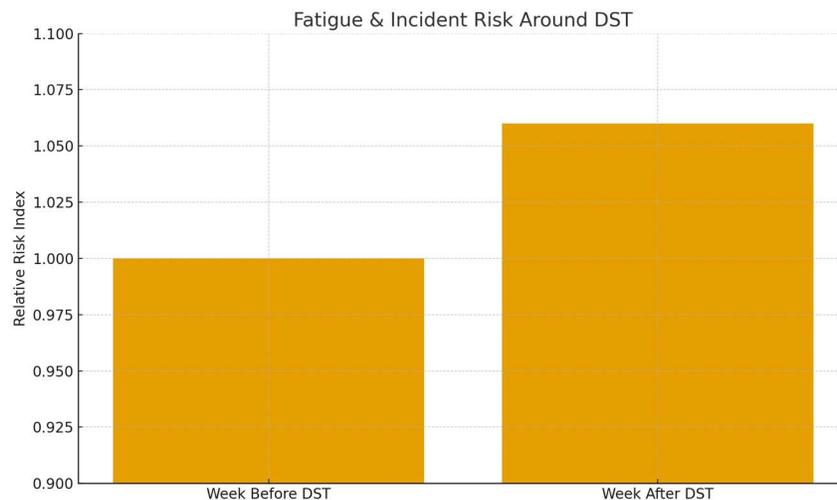


Figure 1 – Example increase in relative incident risk in the week after the spring DST change.

Why DST Is a Safety Hazard

Even a one-hour shift can upset the body’s circadian rhythm. Many people lose 40-60 minutes of sleep on the night of the spring time change, and studies show a measurable increase in workplace incidents and vehicle accidents in the days that follow. Fatigue slows reaction time, reduces hazard awareness, and increases the chance of missteps, especially during early morning hours.

Common Hazards Around DST

- Increased fatigue and ‘microsleeps’ during meetings, driving, and repetitive tasks.
- Early-morning darkness or low light, making it harder to see obstacles, pedestrians, or changes in terrain.
- Slower reaction times when operating tools, vehicles, or equipment.



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- Rushing or skipping steps because internal clocks feel “off” and people feel behind schedule.
- Higher stress levels as sleep loss, schedule changes, and workload demands stack up.

Prevention Strategies

Preventing DST-related fatigue starts before the clock changes. In the days leading up to the transition, you can reduce risk by:

- Going to bed 15–20 minutes earlier for 3–4 nights before the time change.
- Limiting caffeine and screen time in the evening to improve sleep quality.
- Getting outside in natural morning light to help reset your body clock.
- Planning work so the highest-risk tasks are avoided during the first early mornings after the change.
- Using short micro-breaks for movement, stretching, and hydration during the first week after DST.

Emergency Response

If a worker appears extremely fatigued, disoriented, or is having trouble staying awake:

- Stop work and remove them from high-risk tasks immediately.
- Move them to a safe, well-lit area and allow a rest break.
- Encourage hydration with water or electrolyte drinks and a light snack.
- Reassign them temporarily to lower-risk duties if they remain tired.
- If they show confusion, repeated lapses, or appear unfit to drive, notify a supervisor and consider medical evaluation or safe transport home.

Discussion Questions

- How does the time change affect your sleep and alertness during the first few days?
- Which tasks on our job today require the highest level of focus and coordination?
- What adjustments can we make this week (work/rest cycles, task timing, buddy checks) to reduce fatigue risk?

RATTLIR Takeaway

The days around Daylight Savings Time are a predictable high-risk period for fatigue-related errors. By planning ahead, watching out for each other, and slowing down when needed, we can strike before it bites – preventing incidents before they happen.