



CAP Safety Beacon

November 2021

The Safety Beacon is for informational purposes. Unit Safety Officers are encouraged to use the articles in the Beacon as topics for their monthly safety briefings and discussions. Members may go to [eservices Learning Management System](#), click on "Go to AXIS," search for this month's Safety Beacon, take the quiz, and receive safety education credit.

Wellness and Safety

How are wellness and safety connected? We all know that human factors play a significant role in safety outcomes, but how often do we look behind the human factor to determine if wellness was a contributing factor? There are strongly established links between wellness factors such as burnout, fatigue, stress, sleep, diet, and fitness and safety factors such as attention, vigilance, concentration, and memory.

From ***Safety and Health Magazine***:

"Research done at the University of Basel in Switzerland indicates that wellness factors such as stress and fatigue are responsible for 13% of work-related injuries. This research goes on to note that employees with sleep problems are 1.62 times more likely to be injured. Essentially, fatigue is a formula for an unsafe work environment and directly affects concentration, hand-eye coordination, performance, communication, and stress."

Bottom line: *Wellness is the foundation that allows members to participate at their best and safest*

Little things, big impacts

One of the more pernicious outcomes associated with wellness and safety is when you're tired or not feeling well, the physical and mental demand needed for a task increases, leading to less effective task-performance and reduced ability to avoid errors. Even something that sounds as benign as losing an hour or two of sleep can increase the likelihood of negative safety outcome by as much as 230%.

A survey conducted in 2018, by the National Safety Council (NSC) indicated that more than two-thirds of American workers experience some form of workplace fatigue. The council defines fatigue as "feelings of tiredness, sleepiness, reduced energy, and increased effort needed to perform tasks at a desired level." How often are members engaging in CAP missions and activities when experiencing these symptoms? How many realize that their participation could become a contributing factor in a negative safety outcome?

Integrate wellness as a safety check

Given the kinds of activities in which CAP members engage, assessing wellness as a part of mission-readiness and safety risk management is a critical safety check. Take driving a vehicle, for example. People experiencing fatigue are three times more likely to be involved in an accident. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of people (about 28%) don't connect fatigue to negative safety outcomes, exposing them to a mismatch between their personally assessed state of physical and mental health and the demands of a task: a mismatch that is not an ideal condition for safety. Awareness and accountability play a big role in mitigating these risks.

Beyond the [I'M SAFE](#) checklist, is the practice of vigilant wellness reflection that, if practiced consistently and especially when the stakes are high, will help members decide whether they are "up" for the demands of participating in a mission or activity. When they aren't at their best, they could be exposing themselves or others to unmitigated risk. The question to ask is, "Am I feeling like I am able to fully engage in this mission or activity?" If the answer is "no," the safer choice may be to sit that one out.

Resilience

Resilience is about the capacity to bounce back from the demands of our lives. In nature, stress is an important response to demand, like running from a predator. Humans, however, are not equipped to handle the near-constant inundation that is characteristic of the modern world. Many people, including CAP members may experience burnout, which can lead to cynicism, depression, and other wellness impacts. Resilience is not valued as much as self-sacrifice and that leads to "working vacations" or after hours emailing that impede the capacity to bounce back from life's demands.

Over time, job demands, especially demands on time have increased. The pace of change is so dramatic and relentless that keeping up seems to require a high degree of self-sacrifice. What can leaders do? Talk about the connection between wellness and safety. Celebrate members' wellness decisions. Be alert to the signs of fatigue: yawning, difficulty concentrating, tiredness, irritability, reduced alertness, lack of motivation, and others. Encourage members to report "near misses" where wellness factors could have been a contributing factor.

Nicole Spencer, Utah Food Services catering décor manager, offers these ways members can support their wellness.

[Exploring the Connection Between Safety and Wellness \(utahfoodservices.com\)](http://utahfoodservices.com)

Stay hydrated. Water helps your muscles and joints to work better, improves cardiovascular health and cleanses your body inside and out. Bring your reusable water bottle to work and stay hydrated all day! We have filtered water available at all locations, this also helps reduce our carbon footprint.

Eat healthy. Good nutrition has a direct impact on how our body feels. When our body feels good, our mind and spirit follow. Try bringing a few healthy snacks from home to keep a steady nutrition throughout the day.

Exercise. Take the train or bus to work and walk the rest of the way or cycle in to improve cardio. Take up a gym membership. Not only will you feel great by releasing endorphins, but you get to skip the traffic! Happy employees make for a job well done!

Don't work through lunch. Leaving your desk or workstation leads to improved productivity and is the perfect opportunity to clear your head. Find a peaceful place to sit down and focus on your breathing to bring yourself to the present moment, this will help reduce stress and encourage mindfulness before returning to work. Remember to *respect your down time* as well as others.

Take care of your fellow [members]. Read up on different personalities in the workplace to learn how to deal with them. More and more people suffer from mental illness. Watch out for your fellow [member]. When we feel safe in our environment, we also feel valued.

Go outside and see the light. Take 10 minutes to get a breath of fresh air or take a quick walk outside on your break. Going outside restores mental energy, relieves stress, and improves sharper concentration and creativity. Studies suggest employees that go outside are 25% more productive. Did I mention the ramp up Vitamin D intake? Vitamin D helps maintain the immune system, brain, nervous system, regulate insulin levels amongst many other health benefits.

Rest and restore. Adults needs 7-9 hours a night to function at their best. According to the *National Institutes of Health*, poor sleep can also increase the risk of slowed reaction times, irritability, anxiety, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Our bodies have a natural Circadian Biorhythm (our sleep/wake cycle) that regulates hormones including melatonin, 5 HTP, serotonin and cortisol. Getting enough sleep has many health benefits but also, essentially makes us happy! If you have trouble falling asleep, get out of bed and do something very calmly in dim light, like folding socks or writing and try again in 20 minutes.

Key points

- Wellness and safety are linked: Reduced wellness can lead to higher risk for negative safety outcomes

- The demands of a task within a mission or activity can exceed an individual's capacity to meet it when the member is not at full wellness
- Leaders at every level in CAP can support increased safety by paying attention to and communicating the importance of wellness and knowing when to say "no" to a task, activity, or mission

Reflection questions

- What wellness factors do you sometimes set aside because the mission is more important?
- What wellness factors will you pay more attention to in the future before you engage in high-demand tasks with elevated risk?
- Under what conditions would you feel compelled to say "yes" to a task, activity, or mission even though you are not feeling as well as you could?
- What activities, when acted upon, help you experience resilience most