

# Worker Focus Group Guide

## Assessing Fatigue and Fatigue Management in U.S. Onshore Oil and Gas Extraction National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

### Opening script (20 minutes)

Hello. My name is [name] and I'm here with my colleague(s) [name(s)]. Thank you all for taking the time to speak with me today. We appreciate your willingness to participate! We're here today to talk about fatigue while working in the oil and gas industry for the next 90 minutes. You were asked to join this group because we are conducting a study to understand how fatigue affects workers in this industry and your company has volunteered to participate. We would like you to review the informed consent at this point. We will give you a few minutes to read the form and ask any questions. *When participants are done reading the consent form, walk them through the form.* You may keep the form for future reference.

- Do you have any questions for us?
- Do you give consent to be interviewed?
- Do you give consent for the interview to be recorded?

As we just mentioned during the consenting process, your participation is strictly voluntary, and all of your responses will be completely anonymous. It is important that what is said here, stays here so that we can create a safe environment to speak freely without judgement or negative repercussions.

### Ground rules

During our 90-minute chat today, we want to learn from your experience working in the oil and gas industry – especially your experiences with fatigue. When it comes to those experiences, you are the experts. My role will be to help guide the discussion today. I ask that everyone...

- Participate.
  - There are no right or wrong answers. Every person's experience and opinion are important. Speak up whether you agree or disagree with something I say or something someone else says. We expect and want to hear a wide range of opinions and we do not anticipate that everyone will agree with each other.
- Will let one person speak at a time.
  - Please avoid side conversations.
- Keep what's shared today in this room.
  - We will not share your individual responses with your company, and we ask that you do not share what you hear in this room either.
- Please make sure cellphones are on silent mode.

Lastly, we will record our discussion today as we want to be able to capture everything that is said, but we will not be reporting on one specific person or disclose any information that will identify a person, company or specific location in the transcript or final reports.

Are there any other ground rules we should add?

Does everyone agree to these ground rules?

Do you have any questions? Are you ready to get started?

**[Begin recording if consent to record was verbally obtained]**

**["\*" Denotes questions to prioritize in time limited scenarios]**

### Introductions and warm up question

Let's take a moment and introduce ourselves. We do not want to use anyone's real names today. So, when you introduce yourselves, please use a pseudonym of your choosing. Tell us a little bit about how long you have worked in the oil and gas industry, your role within your current company, and the kind of responsibilities you have when your shift ends?

## Main questions (65 minutes)

### Defining fatigue

Today, we're here to talk about fatigue at work. What does the fatigue mean to you? What does fatigue feel like for you?

**[After some discussion, define fatigue for the group so that everyone can have a shared understanding of what fatigue represents. Share definition of fatigue on board so that everyone can reference it during the focus group.]**

When you are fatigued you may lack the energy to complete tasks. On the other hand, when you are sleepy, you are likely to fall asleep. So, fatigue is the body's response to not getting enough sleep or having to exert yourself mentally or physically without enough rest. Today, we're going to talk about 'fatigue.'

### Discussion of fatigue at work

1. Do you think fatigue is a problem in oil and gas work?
  - a. Since you've started work in oil and gas, have you or anyone you know experienced fatigue at work? If so, please tell me more about that experience with fatigue and how it may have impacted work.
  - b. How does fatigue affect people's ability to do their job safely?
2. \*What about work in oil and gas contributes the most to fatigue? Take a moment and write down three examples. *[Give them a few minutes to write.]* Now let's list your examples on the board. *[Ask participants to call out their examples as the moderator writes them on the board.]* Here are a few more *[share researcher's list on the board]*. Some may look like what we just talked about. Tell me about how these factors are related to fatigue.

Researchers list to be added to participants list, as appropriate.

- Weather
- Physical exertion
- Mental exertion
- Necessary personal protective equipment
- Work demands
- Stress
- Working hours (if this isn't captured by "work demands")
- Commuting
- Sleeping arrangements or accommodations
- Opportunities for rest and sleep
- Stress

- a. If you had to pick only one that contributed the most to fatigue, what would it be and why? You can pick something that you mentioned or something that was said by others.
3. \*Given that fatigue management is a shared responsibility, what have employers done to manage fatigue?
    - a. *If they say none of their employers have taken steps to manage fatigue*
      - i. Who in your company would people go to if they were feeling too fatigued to work safely? Would they ask for help? Would they simply acknowledge they were too fatigued to work safely? Tell me about a time that someone (could be you) talked to a co-worker or supervisor about fatigue.
    - b. *If they give examples of what employers have done*
      - i. Tell me about times when employees have used these programs.
        1. (If no one used the programs) Why didn't anyone use the programs?
    - c. \*Regardless of whether they have experience with fatigue management programs
      - i. Here are a few ways that employers can help manage fatigue at work [display on board]. Which of these activities would be particularly helpful for managing fatigue at work and why? Is anything missing?

Ways employers can help manage fatigue

1. Workplace policies or practices to manage fatigue
2. Identify what causes fatigue and take steps to manage it
3. Provide ways for employees to report if they are too fatigued to work safely
4. Provide ways to figure out whether fatigue contributed to a workplace accident

5. Provide fatigue management training and education for employees, management, and families
  6. Employee resources to manage sleep disorders
- d. Does your company have any fatigue detection technologies in place?
    - i. *(if yes)* Can you describe them? Are they helpful? Are they hard to use?
    - ii. *(if not)* Would you be open to using fatigue detection technologies if they were available?
4. We've just talked a lot about what operators and companies do to manage fatigue. The last thing we want to talk about with you all today is the specific crews and supervisors that you've worked with.
- a. \*What does fatigue management look like with crews that you've worked with?
  - b. Can you give me some examples of mistakes co-workers or crews that you have worked with have made when they were fatigued at work? [write examples on the board]
  - c. How often have you seen these mistakes happen? [Rank them on the board]
  - d. [Use the top one or two as examples] Who has this NOT happened to?
  - e. How did you or the crews that you worked with prevent this mistake from occurring?
  - f. What do crew members do to stay alert during their work shift?
5. \*Do you have any questions or comments about anything that we've talked about today? Is there anything you think is important for us to know that we haven't already talked about?

### **Closing Script (5 minutes)**

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us today. Just in summary, today we talked about the role of fatigue in oil and gas work. We had a great conversation and learned a lot about the things that contribute to fatigue and how employers can help manage fatigue in oil and gas. Over the next several months, we will be completing our project and analyzing results. We will share the overall results with your employer once finished. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to the study lead, Alejandra Ramirez-Cardenas, for any reason. Her contact information is in the informed consent document you received. You are eligible for a gift card as a thanks for your participation today. Before you leave please see my colleague [name] for your gift card.