



## Fatigue Risk Management Bulletin #3: Self-declaration of Fatigue

**Mitigation: Controllers may self-declare as unable to perform operational duties due to fatigue and may be authorized to take leave**

### **What is the point of the personal fatigue management policy regarding self-declaration of fatigue?**

The goal is to improve safety by offering a relief valve to employees that enables them to request leave when they are declaring too fatigued to safely perform operational duties.

### **What is the background on the policy change?**

- All operational personnel are obligated to report to work well-rested and mentally alert as to be able to perform their safety duties. When an employee signs in to work they are affirming they are fit for duty.
- Human Resources Policy Manual (HRPM), Volume 4: Employee Relations ER-4.1 (effective July 1, 2008). Chapter 2, Employee Responsibility, Paragraph 2 requires that employees report for work on time and in a mentally alert condition to perform the duties of his/her position.
- The fatigue self-report policy allows the use of leave as a relief valve. Controllers too fatigued to perform their operational duties can make an honest declaration and use leave to recuperate as necessary.

### **How does it work when an employee declares they are too fatigued to perform safety duties?**

- SL: If requested, sick leave shall be approved.
- AL: Annual/Other leave shall be approved upon request on a first requested basis.
- AL: Approval of Annual/Other leave is not subject to staffing and workload. It is based solely on whether or not there are other previous requests for the shift in question which have not been approved
- LWOP: To ensure such requests are properly addressed, authorization of LWOP for this purpose (self-reported fatigue) has been delegated to the FLM or other personnel responsible for acting upon leave requests.
- If leave is requested for self-reported fatigue prior to a shift, leave will be granted for the entire shift, not a portion. If however, the employee subsequently determines that he/she is no longer fatigued, cancellation of leave will be handled in accordance with the CBA.
- There is not a time limit for advance call-ins for self-reported fatigue, however, employees should only self-declare when they have exhausted their ability to obtain necessary rest to recuperate prior to their assigned shift and have reasonably determined they are too fatigued to safely perform operational duties
- Other duties: If an employee self declares too fatigued to work operational duties and requests other duties in accordance with Article 45, the request will be evaluated in the order received and does not have priority.

**Myth:** This leave policy is just a knee-jerk reaction.

**Fact:** FAA Management and NATCA considered and recommended this mitigation prior to media attention.

The recommendation was based on science and formulated by a collaborative group of fatigue scientists, FAA Management and NATCA representatives.

**Myth:** Self-declaring too fatigued to work is a sign of a weak controller.

**Fact:** Self-awareness + action = strength. Being aware of and sensitive to personal fatigue levels is a sign of strength, as is making an honest report of such by requesting leave. Employees should accept responsibility for managing and scheduling their sleep to minimize needing to self-declare and use leave. However, the Agency and NATCA understand that virtually everyone is subject to a sleepless night from time to time.

<https://my.faa.gov/org/linebusiness/ato/safety/fatigue.html>



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