



## Getting All of Life's Tasks Done

“The trouble with an alarm clock is that which seems sensible when you set it seems absurd when it goes off.” Rex Stout, author of “Nero Wolfe” crime novels

### For Those Scheduled to Work in the Daytime:

It seems difficult to get all of life's tasks done, particularly since I've been traveling each week for the past three months. The work with pipeline companies takes about eight hours onsite, and then I do some work on the project in a hotel room. The sound of the alarm early the next morning is unwelcome.

There is a regulatory requirement that requires companies to provide pipeline controllers the opportunity to get eight hours sleep between shifts. That is an excellent idea for pipeline controllers. It would work well for all of us.

I think people working in the daytime may not get eight hours of sleep every night. Some control room managers are having their sleep disturbed by thoughts of these regulatory requirements and an impending deadline. What about you?

Some of us sacrifice sleep to do personal or professional tasks. I'm not very disciplined about going to bed if I am doing something that I think is more important. What about you?

Some are subject to call outs for work at any hour of the day or night. They work eight hours in the daytime, and may then have their sleep disturbed by a call to return to work for problem solving. What about you?

There is no regulation for providing an opportunity for eight hours of sleep to daytime workers. We have to make the right choices.

### For Those Scheduled to Work Rotating Shifts:

The pipeline controller said that he learned only to work and rest on his scheduled work days or nights. That is a successful and sensible strategy for someone who works twelve hours of shifts, whether it is a day shift or a night shift. The controller figured out he should not try to work and participate in personal interests or family events on work days. He realized and decided with his family to pursue his personal and family interests on the days he was not scheduled to work a shift.

Some work our required shifts of eight, ten, or 12 hours and also do other things for a few hours and then use whatever time is left to sleep. Let's think about this situation. Which of these descriptions seems reasonable? Which do you choose?

1. There are 24 hours, and I should sleep about eight hours. If I work 12, drive home, spend some time relaxing, and sleep about eight hours, it will be time to return to work. **SLEEP = 8 HOURS**
2. There are 24 hours, and I should sleep about eight hours. If I work 12, drive to the golf course and spend about four hours, drive home, spend some time relaxing, and sleep about four hours, it will be time to return to work. **SLEEP = 4 HOURS**

Choose # 2 and you may experience **acute fatigue**, a sudden onset of physical or mental weariness due to lack of adequate rest. A person with acute fatigue may have problems performing tasks with his or usual skills, just because the brain will take more time for information processing and the eyes miss some the information in the usual field of vision. Fortunately, acute fatigue is easily cured with about eight hours of sleep.

There are times when any person may miss some sleep, and that is a fact of life. We should not plan our lives so that we purposely miss sleep in attempts to get all of life's tasks done on days when we work long shifts. A shift worker has to make the right choices.