

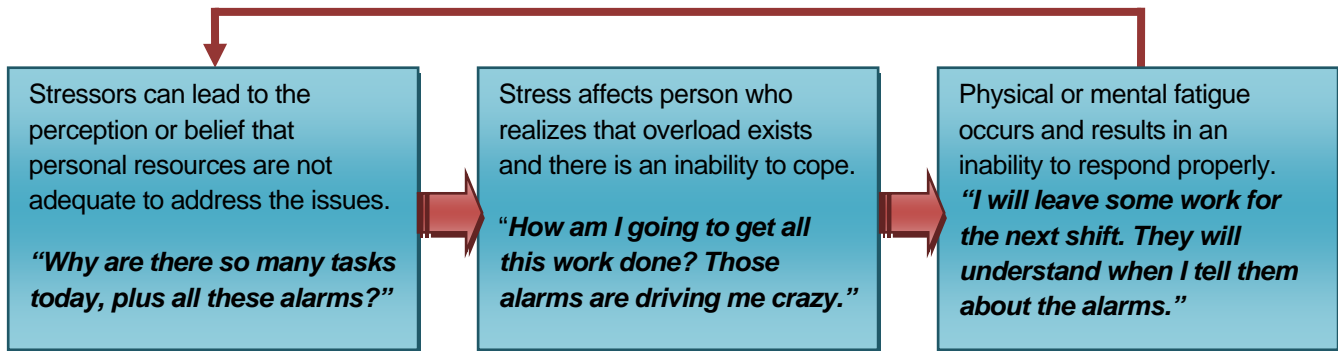


STRESS

Happy New Year! *What goals will you set?* A worthy goal is to defeat the **Dirty Dozen**. These monthly articles will provide information to help you understand and learn about “**The Dirty Dozen Causes of Errors and Accidents.**” As a complement to your calendar, the articles will include questions or topics for discussions with co-workers and family members.

Stress is relevant to pipeline controllers and supervisors because the final control room management rule requires that your company provides education in fatigue mitigation strategies. Guess one of the major effects of stress. It's fatigue! According to a 2007 study by the American Psychological Association, 51% of those under “extreme stress” said that fatigue was the major symptom. 48% reported their stress level had increased in the past five years. *How is your level?*

Stress and fatigue affect other pipeliners and non-pipeliners (every human). Stress is a fact of life. Work-related stressors may be either ‘necessary’ or ‘avoidable.’ Non-work stressors may involve relationships or be internal to the individual. Any of these stressors may lead a person to believe the abilities to respond to stressors are being overwhelmed. *What work-related stressors are necessary in your job? Which are avoidable? What can you do to address each? What can management do to lessen the effects of each type? What can you do?*



How do you respond to the demands that stress places on you? A caveman had two choices when facing a saber toothed tiger: fight or flee. The effects on the caveman were immediate and consequential. The physical response alleviated the effects of stress on the systems of the body. When we are faced with a stressor at work, we are not allowed to fight and we can't flee the scene. Non-work stressors cannot be addressed by fighting or fleeing. Imagine if you responded to your spouse in those ways. *What are your usual responses to stress? Are they healthy or unhealthy? Helpful or harmful?*

Stress was not a problem when I was a pipeline construction worker. The physical work was a healthy response, and I slept adequately most nights in order to do the same work the next day. Physical work and rest are great ways to respond to stress. This might be the crux of why stress can cause problems in a control room. Most of our work is mental, while sitting in an ergonomically designed chair in a temperature controlled environment. And many people do not get enough sleep. *Does your job provide opportunities for physical tasks? If not, what physical exercises do you perform regularly? Are you getting eight hours of good sleep out of each 24 hour day? If not, why not? Are the demands from work or non-work stressors preventing proper sleep? What can be done to improve sleep quantity and quality?*

Stress became a problem when I did not respond in healthy ways. A goal for January might be to research healthy ways to respond to work and non-work stressors AND begin using those healthy ways. If you are a shiftworker, recognize and acknowledge that working rotating shifts is intrinsically stressful. First, gain **Awareness** by learning what causes you stress and good ways to respond. Make **Choices** about actions that you are very likely to complete successfully. Exercise **Tenacity** regularly during this New Year. Stress, in addition to causing errors and accidents, can be harmful to individuals and to their operations. Use **ACT** as a method to set your goals related to stress management. *Set your goals with the input of your family and your co-workers. Discuss your goals with at least one co-worker and your manager during the month.*